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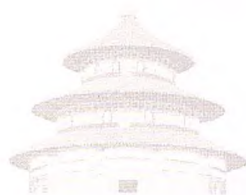
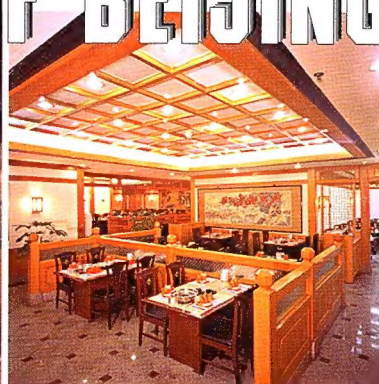
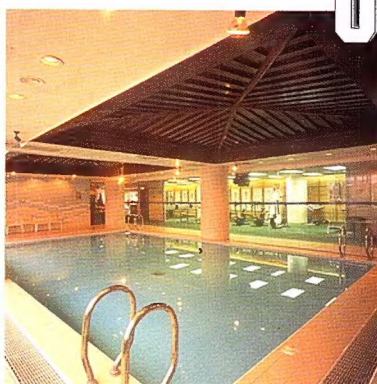
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HIGHLIGHTS

New Ways of Visiting Hainan Island

Photos & Article by Huang Yanhong

The author, who has recently visited Hainan Island, shares with us his experience of relaxing and having fun in the land of sunshine, beach and tropical gardens. There, you may visit the wildlife park, bath in hot springs, play golf on a seaside course, or try diving and sea-walking....



FROM THE EDITOR

The Great Vitality



PHOTOGRAPHY

A Lyric Rural Scene

Photo by Chan Yat Nin



CHALLENGES

Exploring the Southern Slope of Mount Gongga

Photos & Article by Gai Mingsheng, Sun Youbin

A group of artists made a trip to Mount Gongga. Walking along the Tianwan River, they camped in the wild and experienced many unimaginable hardships, and even dangers. All of them believe it was worthwhile because they learned a lot that they might never know.



LEISURE

Celestial Dwelling in the Wuyi Mountains



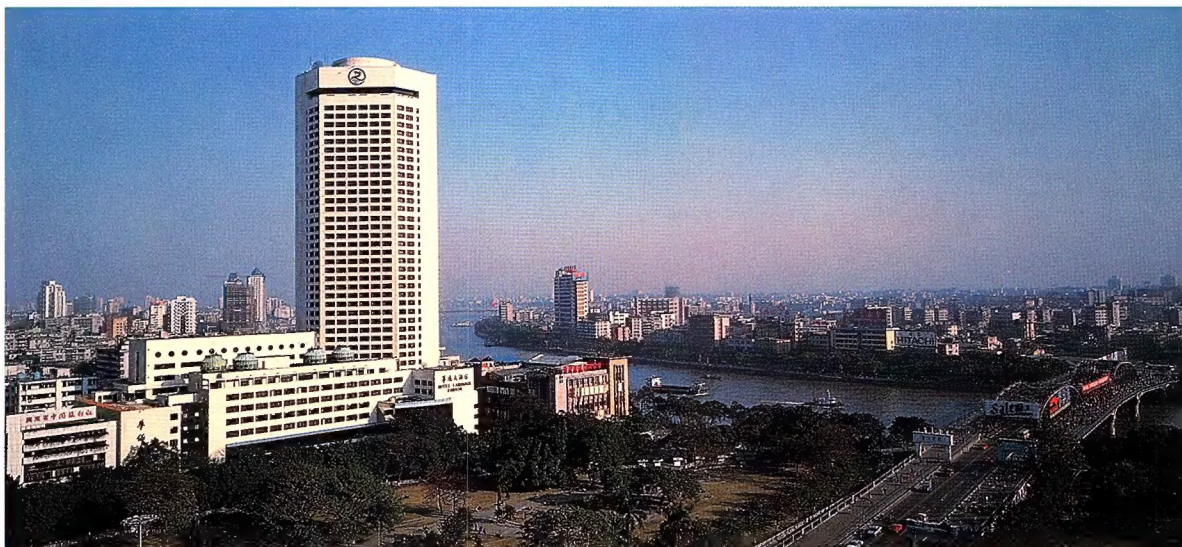
CUISINE

Tasting Seafood at Beidaihe

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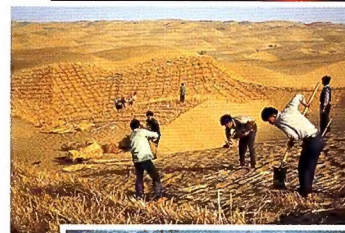
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DISCOVERIES

A Highway Running Through the Desert

Photos & Article by Shi Baoxiu

Following the construction of the highway crossing the Taklimakan, the desert which used to be called "Sea of Death" gained vitality. There are now tourist buses, inns and the petroleum exploitation headquarters. The highway has shortened a journey from the north to the south of the desert from several days to only five hours, and riding through it has become a new tourist programme.



SPECIAL TOURS

Receiving Sand Therapy in the Flame Mountain

Photos by Song Shijing Article by Jin Wei, Song Shijing

CITY PROFILE

Dongguan - an Energetic, Self-made City

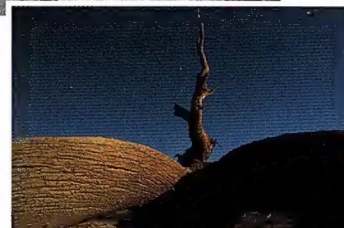
Photos by So Lang Chi Article by Winston Yau

It was an ordinary county seat in the 1970s, but today it has become a flourishing city with a series of industries and a booming catering and entertainment business. Dongguan is one of the booming cities in the Pearl River Delta in South China's Guangdong Province.

SPECIALITIES

Ice and Snow Carvings - the Frozen Art

Photos by Shan Xiaogang, Xie Guanghui Article by Shan Xiaogang
In the Northeastern city Harbin, people create various sculptures of ice and snow. The annual ice and snow carving exhibition held on the Songhua River in the city attracts thousands of visitors.



Cover: A withered tree in the desert

Sun Jiajin

EXPERIENCES

Russian Community in Xinjiang

Photos & Article by Midge Conner

UPDATE

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A Lyric Rural Scene

Photo by Shi Baoxiu

This picture was taken in Jiuzhou, a small ancient town in Jingxi County, Guangxi, inhabited by the Zhuang people. With a rear light, the solitary peaks, the tower, bridge and bamboo bushes appear as silhouettes. Plain in colour, their reflections in the crystal clear water give an atmosphere of peace and quietude, and the overall impression is more of a landscape painting than photography! In its centre a farmer and his buffalo are walking across the bridge, giving the picture a subtle sense of mobility and liveliness. This photograph's success is due to the photographer clicking the camera at precisely the right moment – just as the subjects moved into the bright area between two peaks – to give the work a perfect art formation. It is an excellent example of how a lyric natural scene can be depicted through the photographer's poetic expression.

It is somewhat difficult to select the right aperture while taking photos like this. A standard aperture for the peaks on the right was used by the photographer and the central area and sky were subsequently overlit by a couple of degrees. As a result, more layers have been outlined.

**Estimated data: Camera: Canon EOS-5,
EF70-200 mm/2.8L USM zoom;
Aperture: 8; Shutter: 1/125 second;
Film: Kodak Ektachrome
EB slide (ISO 100)**



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FROM THE EDITOR

THE GREAT VITALITY

It seems unimaginable to build a highway in a vast desert.

But there it lies – the Taklimakan Highway, running 523 kilometres from north to south through the desert. A journey of several days has been shortened to only five hours by this safe and convenient highway which has also led to the emergence of tourism, trucking fleets and inns in the desert. Viewed from the air, the highway looks very much like a long, thin blood vessel, which has brought vitality to the Taklimakan Desert, the “sea of death”.

This costly highway has been built to cater for the needs of oil workers exploiting Taklimakan’s rich oil and gas resources. Oil is the life blood of the economy and its exploration in the desert has invigorated the local economy and brought bright prospects to the “sea of death”.

Money is not everything, of course, but, without economic strength, it would have been impossible to build such a thoroughfare in the desert. The building of the road required solutions to a number of problems, such as the laying of special foundations and its protection from shifting sands, none of which could have been resolved without financial support from the government.

It is a normal desire to wish to improve one’s standard of living and increase wealth. Given the availability of development space, together with individuals’ potential for opportunity and guarantee of the right to enjoy one’s wealth, social economic strength, as a whole, will naturally develop.

The desert is changing. Taklimakan has been revitalised! The momentum of 1.2 billion Chinese people marching towards a new life is irresistible. We wish everybody good luck and a happy life in the New Year.

Photo by Wang Miao

7 Observing undersea world

H I G H L I G H T

2 Playing with the waves

New Ways of Visiting HAINAN ISLAND

Photos & Article by Huang Yanhong

1 Meeting the animals

6 Seaside golf course



8 *Enjoying the sunshine*

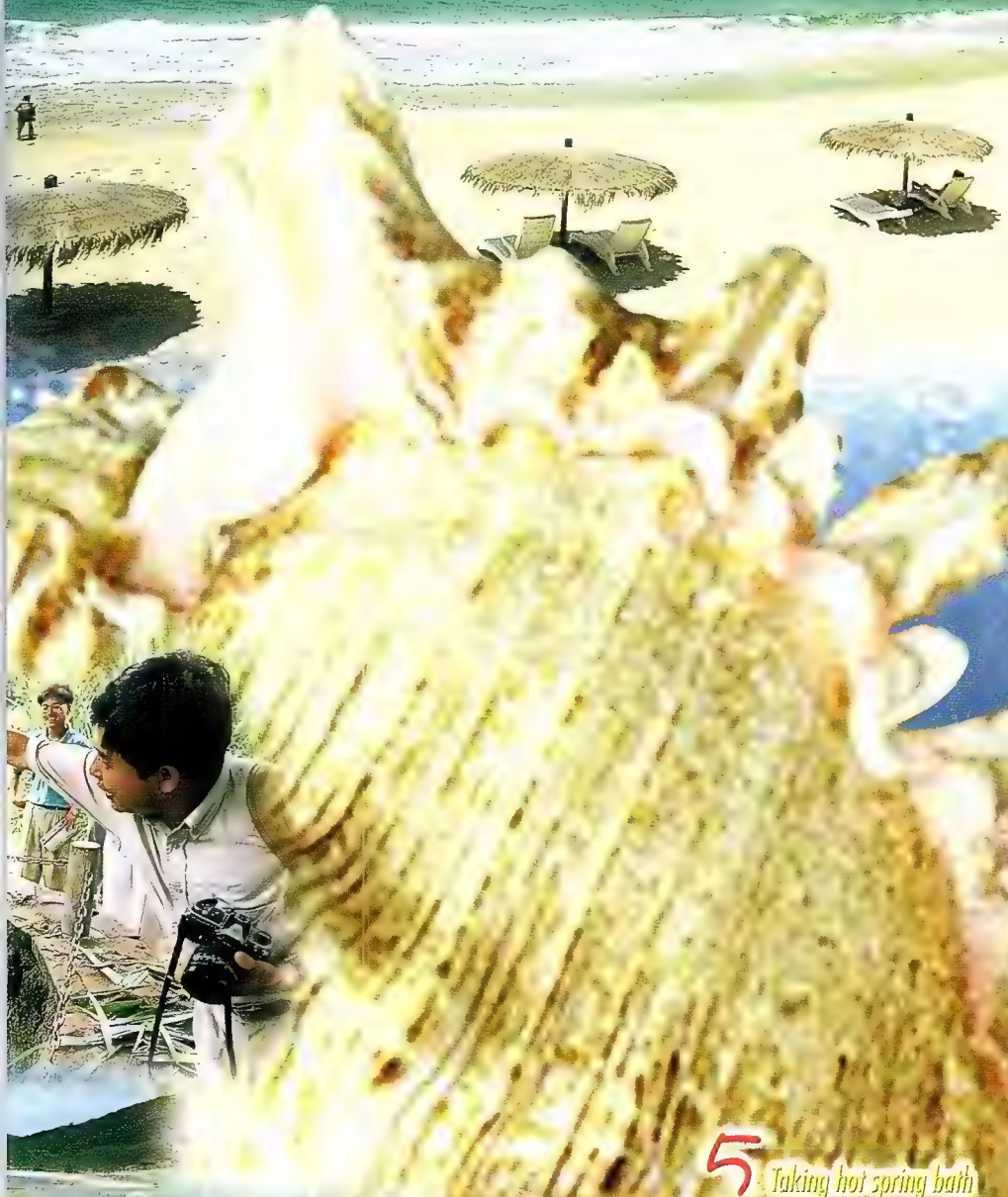
10 *Experiencing diving*

5 *Taking hot spring bath*

9 *A walkway to the beach*

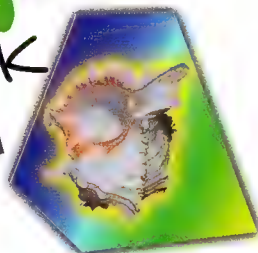
3 *Visiting a volcano crater*

4 *Tasting SE Asian food*



Visiting the Wildlife Park

Meeting the Animals



Human Watching

We drove for 30 minutes from downtown Haikou before arriving at the Wildlife Park. First we went to see lions. Normally lions are kept in cages for people to watch but, here, they were roaming freely while, conversely, it was the visitors who were caged. The lions lying under trees showed no interest in us and, no matter how loudly we shouted, they remained unmoved. Only at the meal time — fortunately it was their weekly special dinner — when zoo keepers threw live chickens from their jeep, did the lions show their agility and ferocity. Fighting over the food began and several naughty young lions appeared to be playing as they tugged the food between them.

Friendly Elephants

The elephants, ambling slowly and looking good-tempered, were very friendly towards us. But they are not always like this, according to one of the zoo keepers. Pointing to the iron encased trees, he said this was to protect the trees from being uprooted by the elephants, and to save the bark on which they scratch their backs. However, this time, the elephants were very friendly towards visitors. Seeing our van stop, they lumbered over to "greet" us. Of course they were really "begging" for food. Many visitors were very generous. They had bought a lot of sugar cane to indulge the elephants although, at one yuan per section, it was not cheap. Some visitors teased the elephants by showing them the sugar cane but didn't let them have it, whereupon the elephants would immediately take their revenge by trumpeting frighteningly or spraying the visitors with water.

Black Bears having Fun

Black bears are actually very intelligent and can make their own fun. As soon as we entered the Bear Zone, we saw a funny scene. It was a very hot day and a bear was squatting under a tap enjoying a

shower with the water spraying against its belly, totally ignoring the cars and vans coming and going. Others were more friendly and came over as our van stopped nearby. One even amused us by pressing its face against the window as if it had a lot to say to us. Looking up, we saw a number of bears on a tree about a dozen metres high, one of which was asleep with its head resting in a fork in the branches.

Homesick Camels

Camels, the great survivors of the desert, obviously are unaccustomed to Hainan's climate. We saw a group of them gathered under a huge banana tree looking for all the world as if they were home sick. The high temperature and humidity had made the camels moult, causing them to lose some of their superior bearing.

As Free as Birds

The Hundred-Bird Garden is a special feature of the park. In a super huge aviary 220 metres long, 110 metres wide and 28 metres high, visitors can experience birds in a natural and harmonious atmosphere. Birds have comparatively more freedom than humans in this area since they can fly and walk; they even have a lake in which to swim! It is the largest aviary in Asia, we were told.

Walking around this super cage, the habitat of thousands of birds can be observed. Ducks soaked up the sun on a small island. Peacocks strutted around but did not readily display their tail feathers unless challenged. The Red-Crowned Cranes liked to provoke and would quietly approach visitors and attack them with their long bills.



Monkeys' Kingdoms

The Flower and Fruit Mountain is home to a hundred monkeys imported from Guangxi. No sooner had they arrived than they started fighting. There were three contenders for leader which resulted in each leading a troop of monkeys to occupy separate parts of the mountain, forming a situation of "three domains". Food has to be placed in three different locations simultaneously to prevent them from fighting.

We entered the Flower and Fruit Mountain cautiously, being afraid of disturbing the monkeys and therefore to cause another fight. Fortunately, it was a very hot day and the monkeys had lost their appetite for fighting. Instead, they swam in the river to escape the burning sun. Some were practising diving while some even tried different diving styles!

Information: There are regular buses to the Wildlife Park from Haikou's Bus Terminus. The bus fare is 7 yuan and admission to the park costs 60 yuan.

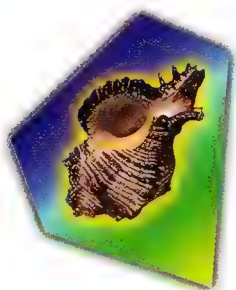
1. The lions show their ruthlessness while being fed with live chicken. (by Qiao Kang)
2. A solemn tiger (by Huang Yiming)
3. Camels seeking coolness under the tree
4. Giving and receiving
5. Lions walking in a carefree style
6. A species of deer found only in Hainan Island (by Huang Yiming)
7. Greetings from a bear (by Qiao Kang)
8. A hippo begging for food



2

Holiday Beach

an Ideal Place to Go



Another ideal place to go in Haikou City is the Holiday Beach, which has replaced the old Xiuying Beach due to the latter's poor facilities. Perhaps attracted by its name, this beach is packed holiday time when Haikou residents and tourists add to beach's allure.

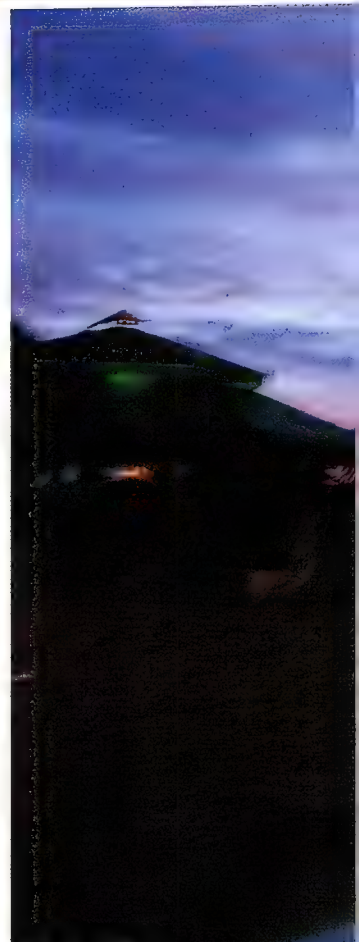
Seeing Haikou City from the beach, the distant buildings appear to dance on the water in the surging waves. The beach has all facilities, and you may rent everything you need, such as sunshades, life buoys, rubber dingys and beach chairs. A children's amusement garden has been built on the beach with a paddling pond and an air-cushion slide, and parents may enter free of charge to watch their children play.

A most exhilarating sport is driving a speedy motorboat, which is loved by young people. You may also rent a rubber dingy for a slow row.

Evening on the beach is a magical time. When the sun has gone down, the cool breezes from the sea makes it an inviting spot with the evening glow casting romantic shadows on the sands. While the daytime revellers are reluctant to leave, those who come especially for the evening are high spirited. Perhaps this is why it has such an entrancing name?

Information: The Holiday Beach is located in the west of Haikou City. The taxi fare from the city centre is about 20 yuan. To rent a sunshade will cost 20 yuan, while the rental of a rubber dingy is 40 yuan.

1. Children enjoying the air-cushion slide
2. Foreign girls on the beach (by Huang Yiming)
3. Motorboat, a sport loved by young people (by Huang Yiming)
4. People are reluctant to leave when night falls.
5. More people come at the dusk



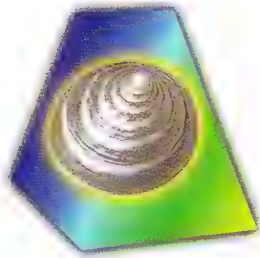


4



5

Mount Ma'an



Observing the Volcano Crater



This is a scenic spot formed by chance.

A million years ago, a volcano erupted in the Qiongsan area, forming a group of volcano craters and limestone caves, as well as the 222.2-metre high Mount Ma'an.

Mount Ma'an (Horse Saddle) has been a tourist attraction for many years and reconstruction work has recently been carried out to give a new look to the place. A road paved with volcanic lava leads to the south and north peaks. A saddle shaped valley between the two peaks is the remains of the very deep caldera. At its bottom there is a large limestone cave, in which one can easily imagine the immense and terrible eruption.

At the foot of the mountain is Shishan (Stone Mountain) Town whose houses are all built with volcanic rock. Bopuxu Street is just such a street of volcanic rock houses. Neither lime or mud was used on the walls, leaving many natural holes in the stones. It is said that these holes help the air flow.

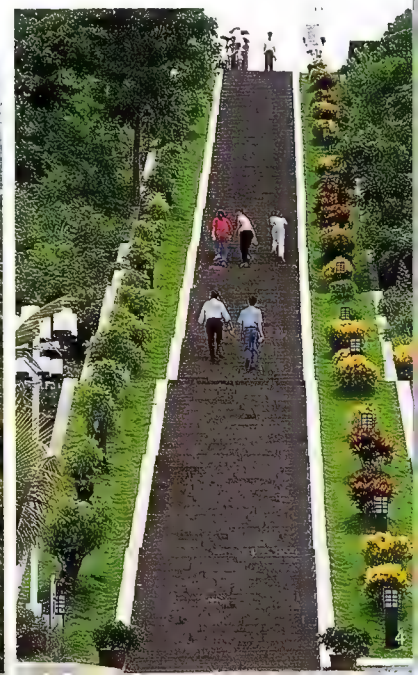
On our return we passed Rongtang Village and saw the Zhongkai Miniature Landscape Garden, where potted landscapes are made from volcanic rocks.

Some tourists visit the area not to view the volcano, nor the artworks, but for the food. The local Stone Mountain Goat meat is famous far and wide and we were lucky enough to taste it. Not too fat and without a strong smell, it is tender and delicious.

Information: Mount Ma'an is 30 kilometres away from Haikou city centre, and is served by buses. Admission is 10 yuan



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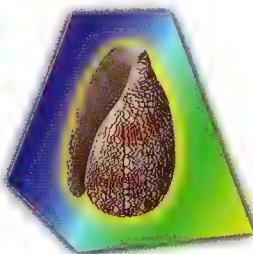
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5

Xinglong

A Place for Good Food



8

Xinglong is the home of many returned overseas Chinese and, because of this, it has become a tourist spot. In addition

to a tour of the Indonesian Red Coconut Village, and visiting the families of returned overseas Chinese, eating Southeast Asian food has become a "must" for tourists to Xinglong. We were told that many returned overseas Chinese retained the culinary habits of their former countries of residence and cook a variety of foreign food.

I had a huge dinner at the Meishigong Restaurant in Kangle Garden, which impressed me greatly.

"Gado Gado" is a cold dish, consisting of only bean sprouts, peas, water spinach, fried bean curd and boiled eggs, but the cook made it taste so different with the addition of peanut sauce. "Bo'edie" sounds very odd and the method of cooking is also strange. I was told that cooked potatoes and raw minced beef are mashed together and then deep fried. "Curried Chicken" looks ordinary but has a very unusual taste. The secret is that the curry spices are made by the cook herself and added at precisely the right moment in the cooking so that they smell rich and fresh. "Badong Beef" is an Indonesian dish. I don't know what kind of spices are used, but the beef tastes so good that the dish was "wiped out" in only a few minutes. "Yellow Ginger Rice" can be regarded as a course rather than a side dish. The rice is cooked with yellow ginger and curry spices and served on fresh banana leaves — its fragrance makes the mouth water. Altogether there are 12 main dishes. I was surprised to learn that the cook was an ordinary housewife who picked the leaves from a tree at her home. She said she learned this method of cooking from her mother and, if her mother had cooked the soup, it would have been even nicer.

Information: A Southeast Asian Style set meal for 10 persons costs 680 yuan, with free fruit and beer.

1. Potted landscapes made of volcanic rocks
2. A dish cooked with stone goat meat
3. The volcano's crater viewed from the air (by Huang Yiming)
4. The road leading to the peak
5. An Indonesian-style soup
6. Various ingredients for Southeast Asian food
7. Yellow ginger rice served on fresh banana leaf
8. Southeast Asian cuisine served at Xinglong
9. Rice cooked in coconut shells



6



7



9



The hot springs at Xinglong originally gushed naturally. These are not sulphur springs but contain high amounts of fluorine and metasilicate which are good for treating skin diseases and arthritis. Some distinguished guests have been coming to "take the waters" since as early as the 1950s.

I stayed in the Kangle Garden at Xinglong for several days and enjoyed the hot springs very much. The hot water is connected to baths in the rooms, and there are also three outdoor hot spring swimming pools with different temperatures, the smallest of which acts as a jacuzzi.

A hot spring tropical garden has recently been built with about 20 water massage pools which adds to the enjoyment of the place. Bathing in the outdoor pool, you may enjoy these waters in the sunshine. However, some people also like to bathe alone in the tiny wooden cabins and, if you bathe in the evening, you can savour lights swinging in the shadows whilst listening to soft and gentle music.

Information: A bus goes to Kangle Garden from Haikou Hotel in Haikou everyday at 2:30 p.m. The rate for a garden view room is 858 yuan per night. Swimming is free of charge. Admission to the Hot-Spring Garden costs 80 yuan.

1. A barbecue dinner is served on the lawn.
2. An indoor jacuzzi
3. Enjoying the hot spring in the sunshine
4. Outdoor swimming pools with three different temperatures
5. The graceful Hot Spring Garden







1. Korean tourists playing at Nanyan Bay Golf Course
2. A coach of the club demonstrating
3. The charming beach at Yalong Bay
4. This carved pillar is a landmark of Yalong Bay.
5. Experiencing an underwater trip 6. Undersea World Hotel
7. The Central Square of Yalong Bay viewed from the air (by Huang Yiming)

Nanyan Bay used to be unknown to outsiders, but sun, sea, and the green of a newly built golf course has made it suddenly famous. There are not many golf courses in the world in which players may easily hit the ball into the sea. That is why in its first few months of testing, more than 6,000 golfers came to play from the United States, Australia, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Playing golf at Nanyan Bay is really luxurious. The course has 18 holes extending right onto the beach and players can experience the excitement and relaxation of playing on beautiful greens so close to the blue sea. A clubhouse with restaurant has been built on a slope with a wall of windows facing the course and the sea through which one can relax while watching the play.

Another place nearby worth visiting is Shimei Bay. It has just a few fishing boats quietly lying on the beach and few tourists can be seen.

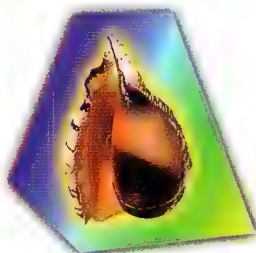
Information: Nanyan Bay is three kilometres from the Shimei exit of the Eastern Expressway, but no public buses go there. It is best to go there in a group by hire car. Admission to the golf course costs 500 yuan for non-members.





Yalong Bay

the Undersea World



Yalong Bay is one of the most beautiful bays in China.

Its 3.5-kilometre long, white sandy beach looks like a silk ribbon tied around the blue sea. A 20-metre pillar carved with Apollo, dragons, phoenixes and unicorns in relief, has been erected in Central Square.

All visitors come here for the sea, but not necessarily everyone goes swimming. Many people like to roll up their trousers and run along the beach, or paddle and splash about in the water, screaming excitedly, while letting their clothes get wet.

The Undersea World makes for a most interesting visit when a semi-submarine takes visitors down under the water. First of all, visitors take a motorboat to Xipai Island and transfer to the submersible where, at the bottom of a ladder, the undersea world can be observed through glass windows in the oblong chamber. The semi-submarine glides slowly forward while fish swim past. Mostly they are the black-and-white striped "Map Fish" and the black flat "Idiot Fish" which calmly go about their business and totally ignore the visitors. However, the most beautiful sights are the corals. It is said that this area contains the most complete soft coral groups and coloured hard corals in the world. A viewing zone of nine square kilometres is presently under construction in order to help protect and develop these coral reefs.

Information: Very few buses go to Yalong Bay from Sanya City, therefore it is preferable to hire a taxi which costs about 70 yuan. The ticket for a semi-submarine sail is 230 yuan.





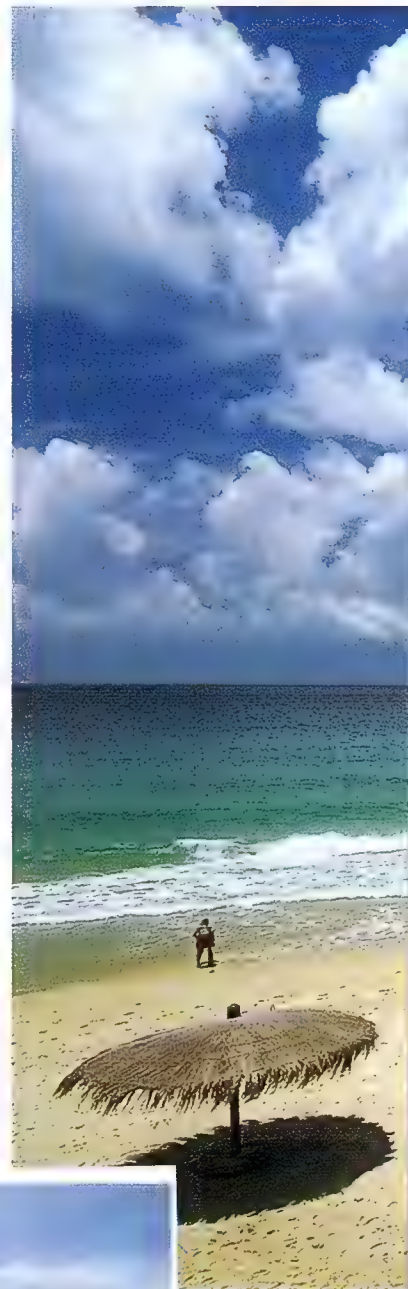
According to some in the tourism industry, Gloria Plaza Hotel is the best holiday venue in China. Seen from distance, it appears to be a giant piano set by the blue sea. A special feature of the hotel is the way it utilises the natural environment – the sun, the beach and profuse foliage. On the 2,000-metre-long beach, a row of brown-coloured straw sunshades and white beach chairs add to the leisure facilities of this tropical beach.

At the Gloria you will be made well aware of the attraction of the sea. The hotel was built to give as many sea vistas as possible with more than half the rooms sea-facing. The sea is all-encompassing for visitors to the Gloria. When you step out of doors you step directly onto the beach; look out of the window and you see the sea; you may relax on the beach during the day and listen to it at night. When eating breakfast or having a drink at the bar, you can feel the sea breeze and taste its slightly salty tang. You are tempted to linger over yet another cup of coffee to soak up the atmosphere. No wonder many visitors tarry awhile with little thought of leaving.

Upon entering the hotel, you immediately have the impression of being in an art gallery with every space occupied with a unique, colourful and lively scene. Also, you will be struck by the fact that there is no air-conditioning in the lobby — very rare in a five-star hotel, especially in a tropical area. This is a bold stroke. But where then does the wind come from? All the doors and windows remain open to

allow the damp sea breezes blow through the lobby and take away the heat. This natural “air-conditioner” is open at all times, even during the hottest weather, and the hand of heaven is the remote controller.

Another interesting thing observed in the lobby is that attendants are dressed in informal short-sleeved coloured shirts. Their demeanour is natural and they are very polite



and hospitable, making patrons feel at home. Meanwhile, the hotel's customers are also very casual, even wearing swimming costumes, pyjamas or sandals in the lobby. This is certainly a really good place to relieve stress.

Food provided by the Gloria is wonderful, although prices are pretty high. To the right of the lobby is a Western restaurant with a European chef — its breakfast buffet is very welcome! A few tables are situated outside the restaurant close to the beach which provides a romantic touch. The bar in the corner of the lobby is very arty, especially with its pendent lamps made from the skin of globefish. On the second floor is the Boat Restaurant, whose decoration creates an atmosphere to lure people to indulge more. The decor includes fishing



boats, fishing nets, sails, fishermen's hats and wooden buckets, even the flower vases are made of sea snails. Eating in this restaurant gives you the feeling you are eating what the depicted fishermen have just caught.

The hotel also has an outdoor swimming pool, where you may enjoy different water sports like water basketball and volleyball.

In addition, the hotel provides a honeymoon "package" for newlyweds, such as a sea-view room, flowers, candlelit dinner, photography, and other gifts.

Information: The Gloria Hotel is about a kilometre from Central Square. The rate for a standard room is 810 yuan per night.

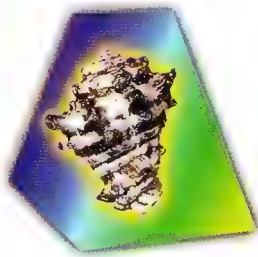
1. The Boat Restaurant
2. Gloria Plaza Hotel is designed to let the rooms receive as much sunshine as possible.
3. The uniquely decorated bar
4. The 2,000-metre-long beach outside the hotel
5. Gloria Plaza Hotel's outdoor swimming pools





Pearl River Garden

a Walkway to the Beach

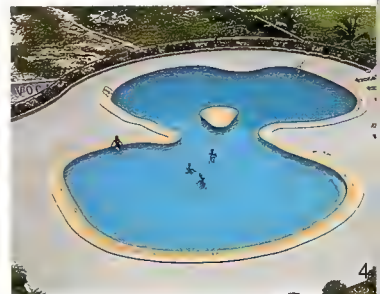


1. Girls selling their catches on the beach
 2. A section of the green belt at Dadonghai Bay
 3. The walkway leading to the sea at the Pearl Garden Hotel
 4. The Pearl Garden Hotel's outdoor swimming pool
 5. A diving training course
 6. The fantastic undersea world (by Zhao Jinbo)
- Next page: A professional underwater photographer at work (by Zhao Jinbo)

Dadonghai is one of Sanya's famous bays.

This bay is not very long and does not have Yalong Bay's natural beauty. However, because it is close to Sanya city centre, with convenient transport and good changing and washing facilities, it is crowded with tourists. Many star-graded hotels have been built around the bay.

One of the most impressive hotels in this area is the Pearl River Garden which, from a distance, looks like a giant ship about to set sail. It is the closest hotel to the sea, which may be why many people choose to stay there, and it has many luxury facilities. The morning tea served there, with its variety of dishes, is delicious, and it is inexpensive. However, the rate per night for a room with a sea view is expensive, about 200 yuan higher than that for other rooms. But if you go there, it is best not to worry overmuch about the money, in other words, you may regret missing an opportunity to enjoy a room with a sea view. The hotel has invested several million yuan in building a walkway to the beach which has an escalator at one end and is of great convenience for its guests, who, after swimming in the sea, do not have to cross the lobby in swim wear, but can go directly to a lift and thence to their room.



A more beautiful environment has been created in the bay area with the provision of a green belt planted with trees, flowers and grass. Looking out from a sea-view room in the Pearl River Garden Hotel, you can enjoy the changing views of the sea by day and the twinkling red lights of fishing boats on the sea by night.

Information: Several buses go to Dadonghai from Sanya City, for which the fare is one yuan. The rate for a sea-view room is 880 yuan while that for an ordinary room is 630 yuan per night, but there are group discounts and off season rates. A motorboat may be hired for 10 yuan per minute with a minimum of 12 minutes.






Diving tourism is a novelty in China.

Sanya is undoubtedly a good place for diving. Several diving companies, such as the China Tourist Service, Water World Co., South Sea Co., and the Sea Star Co., have started business at Dadonghai. The biggest of these companies is the South Sea Co. which provides high-grade diving facilities for tourists, while the Hainan branch of the China Tourist Service was the first to provide diving facilities and is the most experienced. Water World provides the most popular diving options.

Out of curiosity, I enrolled for a diving course. Because I am quite big, the diving suit provided seemed too small for me. Our instructor informed us that a diving suit will not only protect against cuts and scratches, but also keeps the diver warm — underwater, a human body will lose heat about 20 times faster than in air. Since I did not have too much time I only had a quick lesson, through which I learned how to



A full-page underwater photograph. In the upper right, a diver's headlight is visible, casting a bright beam of light. The water is dark blue with many small bubbles rising. In the lower half, a coral reef is visible, covered in various types of coral and small fish. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the diver's light.

use the equipment: the depth gauge, compass and the floating controller. Many other things also had to be considered, for instance, how to breath through one's mouth, how to grip the snorkel with your teeth whilst breathing, how to reduce the pain in your ear using sign language underwater, as well as learning about environmental regulations to protect marine life.

After a 30 minute lesson, I put on a pair of flippers, an oxygen bottle, hung four lead blocks around my neck and following our instructor, I dived into the water. A swimmer since childhood, I swam so fast that the instructor had to stop me several times by holding up his hand. During the dive, I encountered some small currents which prevented me from advancing. It is really a mysterious world underwater with its corals and many species of fish: the long thin "bamboo strip fish", "clown fish", grouper and





eels — some swam past while others stayed with you. I also saw corals of two types: soft and hard. After 10 minutes into the water, we were eight to nine metres underwater at which point I experienced some pain in my ears. I “popped” my ears by holding my nose whilst puffing up my cheeks and the pain was gone. Our instructor was very responsible. Time and again, he pointed out to us some beautiful sea plants.

Another diving programme is called “Undersea Walking” (at present only Water World Co. provides this option) and it is easier to learn. A boat takes you out to a certain point where, after putting on a diving helmet, you can walk around in water six metres deep. The underwater walk lasts approximately 30 minutes, but the distance you actually cover may only be about a hundred metres.

Information: The cost of the “Undersea Walking” is 180 yuan whilst the cost of the diving lesson is 350 yuan. A diving tourist package offered by the South Sea Diving Co. costs 5,999 yuan.

1. A diving class 2. Walking under water



Tips for the Traveller:

◆ **Transport:** The distance from Haikou to Sanya is 313 kilometres, a half day's drive, or it costs 70 yuan by bus. Xinglong lies in between, 207 kilometres from Haikou, whilst Nanyan Bay is about 10 minutes by car from Xinglong.

◆ **Accommodation:** Hainan has over 300 hotels so there are plenty of places to choose from on the island. In Haikou, there is the Huandao Hotel (1,176 yuan for a standard room), the New Spring Hotel (755 yuan for a standard room) and the Five Continents Hotel (568 yuan for a standard room). In Xinglong, there are the Kangle Garden (858 yuan for a standard room), the Gold & Silver Island Hotel (775 for a standard room) and the Bright Sun Villa (388 yuan for a standard room). In Sanya there are hotels such as the International Hotel (580 yuan for standard room), the Pearl River Garden Hotel (630 yuan for a standard room), the Gloria Plaza Hotel (810 yuan for a standard room) and the South China Hotel (450 yuan for a standard room).

◆ **Shopping:** Unique souvenirs of Hainan include coconut carvings, shell carvings, pearls and crystal. In addition, local products such as coconut foodstuff and cashew nuts can be obtained.

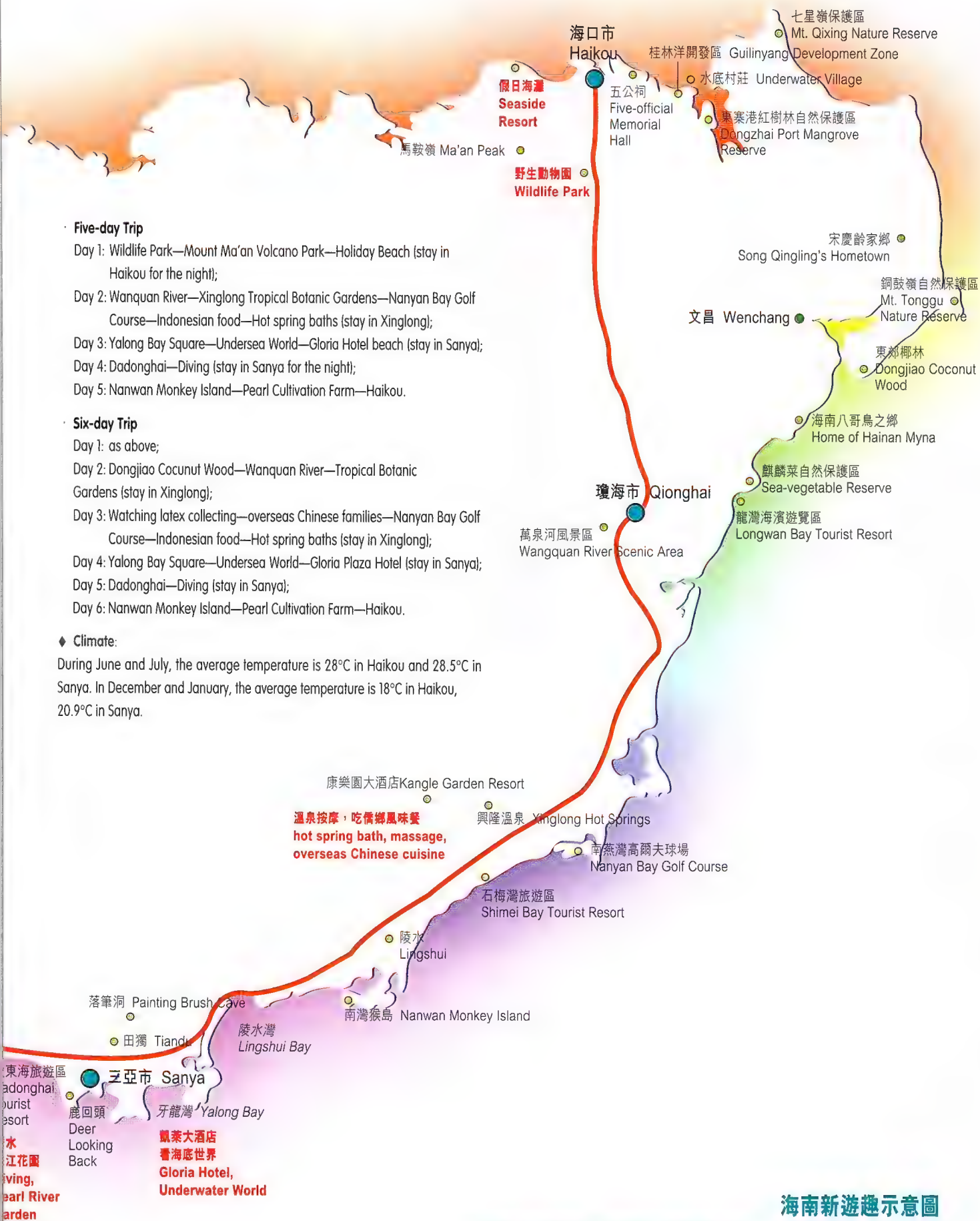
◆ Other Tourist Spots in Hainan:

- Qiongtai Academy was built in the 39th year of the Kangxi reign during the Qing Dynasty in memory of a famous Ming-dynasty minister Qiu Zun.
- Five-Officials' Memorial Hall was built to honour Li Deyu, a Tang-dynasty prime minister, and four Song-dynasty officials, Li Gang, Li Guang, Hu Quan and Zhao Ding, who were assigned to Hainan from their imperial posts.
- The Hai Rui Tomb is located in the suburbs of Haikou. Hai Rui was a Ming-dynasty official.
- Dongjiao Coconut Wood is located in Wenchang County, where coconuts have been grown for 2,000 years.
- Wanquan River Tourist Area: Along the 162-kilometre Wanquan River are many pictureque scenes.
- Nanwan Money Island, the only monkey reserve in China is located in Lingshui County.
- Deer Looking Back is a park in Sanya where sculptures depict the love story between a hunter and a deer. It is also an advantageous point for a panoramic view of Sanya.
- Tianya Haijiao is located at the foot of Mount Magong, 24 kilometres northwest of Sanya. The beach is famous for its hundreds of huge rocks scattered in the blue water. The Chinese characters for Tianya (Heavenly Edge) and Haijiao (Sea Corner) are among others carved on one of the rocks.
- Dongshan Summit is located two kilometres east of the county seat of Wanning. On its rocks are carved calligraphy works of various dynasties.
- Tongshi is wonderful summer resort. Located in the middle of Hainan Island, it has villages inhabited by Li and Miao peoples. There is also a museum of ethnic cultures.
- Pearl Cultivation Farm is located in Lingshui County.

◆ Suggested Routes:

• Four-day Trip

- Day 1: Wildlife Park—Xinglong Tropical Botanical Gardens—Tasting Indonesian food—Enjoy a hot spring bath;
- Day 2: Yalong Bay Square—Undersea World—Gloria Plaza Hotel (stay in Sanya for the night);
- Day 3: Dadonghai—Diving (stay in Sanya over night);
- Day 4: Nanwan Monkey Island—Pearl Cultivation Farm—Haikou.



海南新遊趣示意圖
 Location Map of Tourist Spots on Hainan Island

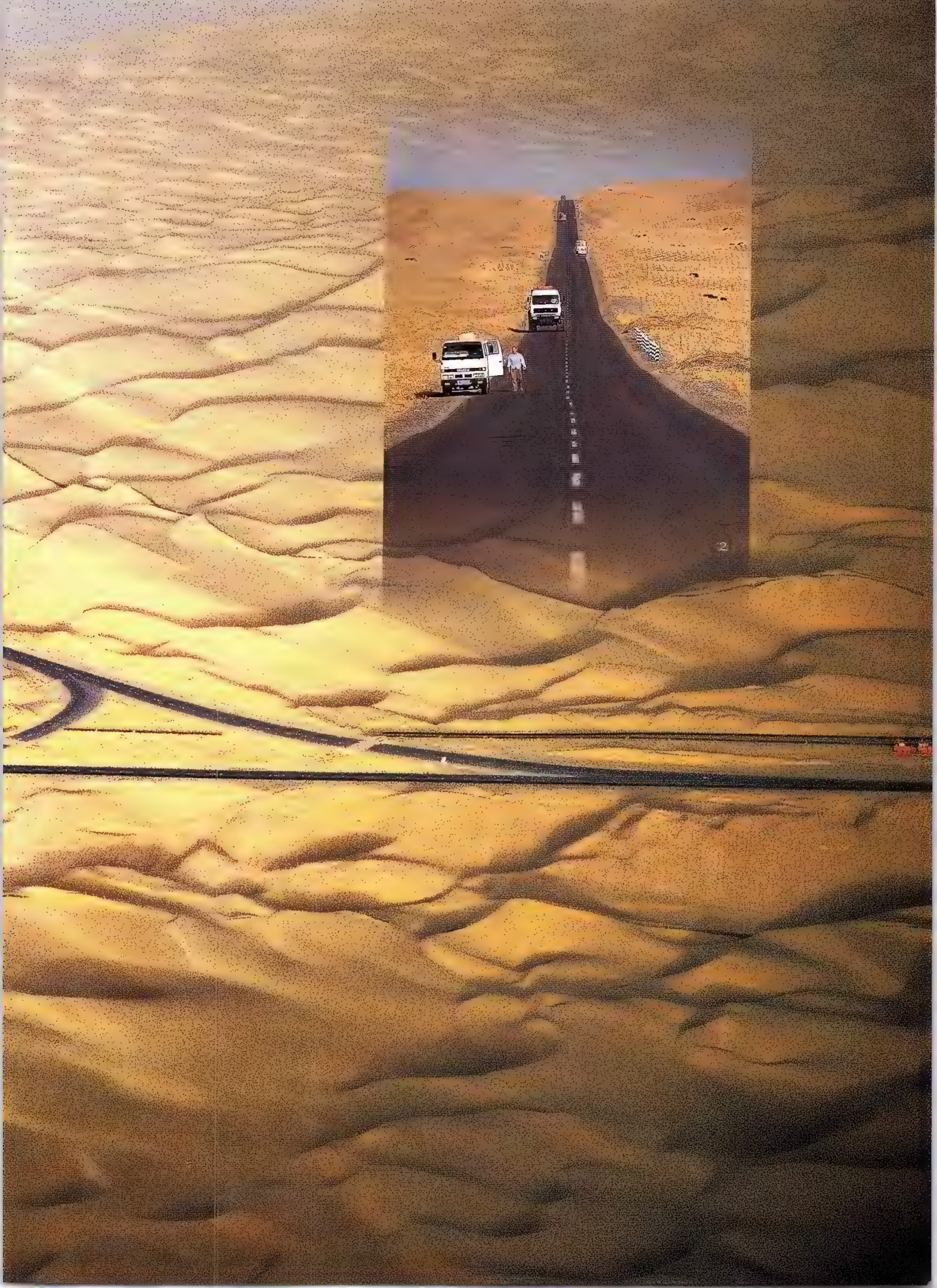


DISCOVERIES

A Highway Running Through the Desert

Photos & Article by Sri Beoku

The Taklimakan Desert has come to life!
There is now a town with vegetable gardens,
And men and women in colourful clothes.
This is not a mirage; it is real.
The desert-crossing road has given life
to the boundless "Sea of Death".



Crossing the "Sea of Death"

The desert highway runs a distance of 523 kilometres from Luntai (Bügür) to Minfeng. Natural scenery along the way includes the Tarim River, virgin forests of diversiform-leaved poplars, sand willows, and a boundless expanse of sand—sand hills and sand hollows.



Taklimakan, the desert's name, means "to enter and never come out" in the Uygur language. Foreigners, who are so romantic in their language, simply call it the "Sea of Death". In the past, ordinary people kept away from it. Only explorers, treasure-hunters and desert specialists had the courage to go deep into the barren desert. When they went, they were always fully equipped with special provisions.

Today, going into the desert, or even crossing it, is like a weekend outing. There is no need to carry water and rations for two weeks. People can cross the desert in one day, and travel lightly, because there is now a desert highway!

No More Threat of Death

Setting out from Korla, we drove westward for more than 170 kilometres to Luntai, and turned southward to reach the starting point of the Taklimakan Desert Highway. When the jeep got onto the desert highway, the road surface gave us a different feeling. The wheels seemed to be rolling more briskly and steadily, as if they were chasing the wind. The speed easily exceeded 120 kilometres per hour if the driver did not take care to slow down. Without stopping to take a rest, we crossed the "Sea of Death," which is over 523 kilometres wide, and travelled further west to Minfeng. The entire journey took only five hours.

In the past, before the desert highway was built, the overland journey from Korla to the Hotan area in southern Xinjiang was an arduous one. A traveller had to go westward first to Kashgar, then southward to Yecheng and then turn back and go east for 1,000 kilometres to reach Hotan, an area known for its beautiful jade, silk and carpets. The detour of more than half a circle around the western part of the Taklimakan Desert was more than 1,400 kilometres. Without stopping, it took two and a half days.

As the jeep rolled on at high speed along the smooth surface of the highway, we sat comfortably in the jeep and watched the constantly changing scenery of the desert.

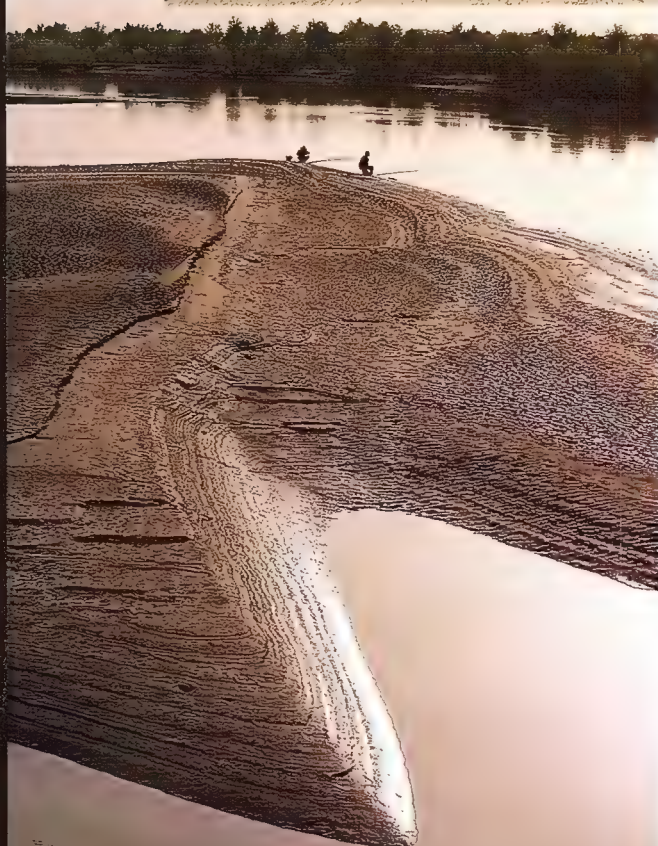
Travelling southward along the highway, we soon came to the bank of the Tarim River, the longest inland river in China. The river rises in the Kunlun Mountains in Taxkorgan and flows for 1,000 kilometres before disappearing into the sand in the Lop Nur area. Here, the river meanders eastward along a wide river bed, its waters transparently clear. We saw a few off-duty petroleum workers fishing on a shoal. Tall poplars and sand willows grow on both banks of the river. It is hard for an outsider to believe that life is thriving on the edge of the "Sea of Death".

Previous page:

1. The desert highway viewed from the air. The road extending to the left is the branch road leading to the central Tarim headquarters of the Tarim Oilfields. (by Zhao Chengan)
2. The construction cost of this 523-km desert highway was over one billion yuan.

This page:

1. Taking a break from the journey across the "Sea of Death"
2. A long-distance bus departing from Luntai in the morning can reach Minfeng, on the southern edge of the desert, in the afternoon.
3. Off-duty oil workers fishing on a shoal of the Tarim River
4. An 1,000-year-old dead tree







2,400-Year-Old Poplars

After crossing the bridge across the Tarim River, we came to an arid area of poplar forests. At first, the trees were sturdy and grew in large forests, extending as far as the eye could see. Before we had driven about 10 kilometres, however, the trees began to become sparse, and shorter, and many had fallen flat on the ground in disorder. As we proceeded further south, all we could see were solitary trees here and there, many of which had been dead for ages. With their bark gone, they looked quite melancholy.

The local Uygurs say, "The poplars live for 800 years, stand for 800 years after they die, and do not rot for another 800 years after they have fallen down." So, each of the hollow old poplar trunks lying on the ground are relics from the remote past.

Gradually, even the poplar trunks disappeared, replaced by sand willows and unknown shrubs which are even more resistant to drought. Although the sand willows and shrubs varied in height, they all had one thing in common: all their leaves had degenerated into small, scale-like or needle-shaped blades.

1. The highway has turned the "Sea of Death" into a tourist attraction. (by Zhao Chengan)
2. A flock of sheep on the way to a new pasture appears on the roadside near Minfeng.
3. Poplars thrive on water from the river on the southern edge of the desert.



Sand Hills, Ridges and Hollows

When we were about 100 kilometres into the desert, all we could see was a boundless expanse of greyish yellow sand. There was hardly a speck of green. We climbed to the top of a sand hill and looked around, and found that the Taklimakan is quite different from other deserts. Most of the other deserts, such as the Shanshan, Badain and Tengger, are covered with crescent-shaped sand dunes of almost equal height which look like sea waves. What we saw here were projecting sand hills extending in all directions to form long ridges. There are hollows between the sand hills and basins surrounded by sand dunes. In short, the surface of the desert is very uneven.

The highway followed the contours of the desert, climbing over sand hills and through hollows. Although there was no green grass or trees, the scenery on either side of the highway was not monotonous.

As we neared the southern edge of the desert, the green gradually returned and by the time we reached Minfeng there were even large oases. Surrounded by green grass and with the reflection of the sand hills in them, the oases were unusual scenes of natural beauty. Minfeng was the terminus of the highway.





An Inn in the Desert

After leaving Petroleum Island we headed south again along the highway proper. The sun was setting and we were deep

in the desert. As traffic on the highway was sparse, the evening shadows made one feel lonely. Suddenly, the silhouette of a small house jumped into sight in the distance. We saw dimly the figure of a child kicking a ball in the sand close to the house.

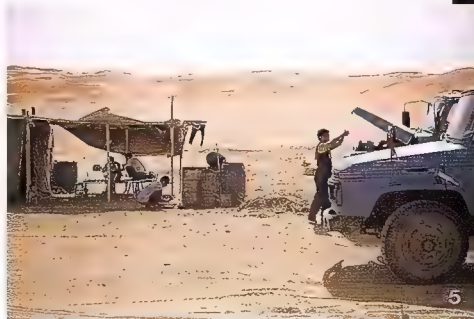
When we drove to the house, the child ran into it and brought out a man and a woman, both about 40 years of age and both Uyghur. In broken Han language, the man asked what we would like to have for dinner. So the house was an inn!

"There's no light. Are we to eat in the dark?" I asked. "Don't worry. I have a generator," said the man. And saying so, he turned round to pick up an iron rod from behind the door of the house and walked towards a pile of machines on one side of the house. After busying himself with his hands and feet, the machines began to purr and the bulbs in the house, on the roof and at the roadside burned brightly.

The woman was busy at the stove and in no time brought us three large dishes of mutton and noodles. The man brought three bottles of beer to the table. As we ate, he and his small girl came to sit at the table and began to chat with us.

He said that he was from Minfeng. As there were already too many eating places in his

home town, he had brought his business deep into the desert to earn a living. Although there was no competition here, it was very difficult to run a restaurant in the desert. There was neither water nor electricity, and both food and fuel had to be brought in from outside the desert. In the beginning, as traffic was thin, business was slack. Several times he intended to give up and return home. It was with much difficulty that he managed to stay. As there was now more traffic along the highway, his business was picking up every day.



I took out a hairpin from my bag, gave it to the girl, and told her to ask her mother to help put it in her hair. The man smiled and said that the woman was the girl's aunt. Her mother had just hitched a ride to Minfeng to get some vegetables and water.



Unconventional Method of Building the Highway

How was the highway built on loose sand? Did the builders ship in stones from other places to build the roadbed? Did they divert water from a faraway place to mix the cement? Or did they use prefabricated concrete slabs? Few people can give the correct answer because the highway was built with an unconventional method.

Drivers like this highway because it is smooth and wide, and, since there are no abrupt turns, the driver can see far into the distance. Traffic is thin, and a good motor vehicle can cover the distance of 523 kilometres in four hours.

As the wind whistles by the windows of a speeding car, and the sand dunes are left behind one after another, people sitting in the car cannot help wonder how the road was built.

How Was the Road Built, Anyway?

Everybody knows that building a strong roadbed is most important in road construction. A road cannot last long unless it has a solid foundation. Across the vast Taklimakan, however, there is nothing but a large expanse of fine sand. Even a handful of stones the size of a bean is hard to come by, to say nothing of pebbles and slates. It is by no means an easy job to fetch stones from the distant Tianshan Mountains.

Of course, it would be ideal to build the roadbed with concrete. But in the desert there is no water to be used to mix the cement! To fetch water over long distances is equally impractical. Some people have suggested building the road with prefabricated concrete slabs. This, however, is easier said than done. The cost of manpower and materials would be enormous. Moreover, the hard concrete slabs, resting on the soft sand, and with moving vehicles bouncing over them day and night, would soon break. And, once they are broken, it would be even more costly to repair them.

Conquering the Sand with Sand

There is a folk saying in the Northwest: "If you don't know how, you earn 200 yuan less." It is the specialists who know how. Building a road over the sand involves tremendous difficulties, but road building specialists know how to overcome the difficulties.

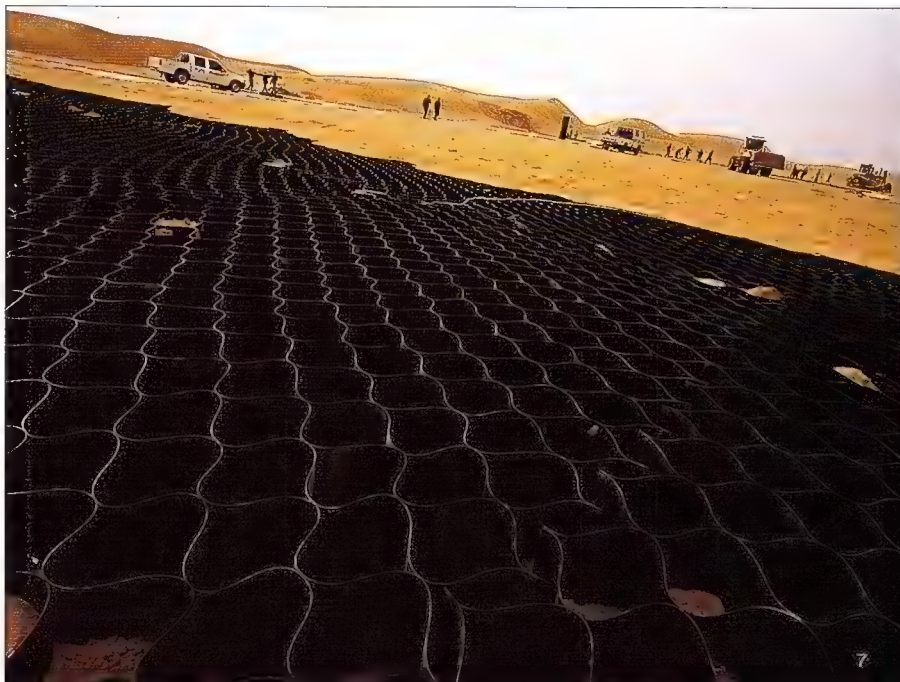
Instead of fetching stones or water from faraway places, or spending money transporting prefabricated concrete slabs, they used bulldozers to blaze a trail through the sand hills and hollows. After pressing the sand down solid with road rollers, they placed a layer of plastic fabric over it. The plastic fabric was then covered with another layer of sand. After making this second layer of sand solid with road rollers, another layer of plastic fabric was then placed over it. This process was repeated several times until the roadbed became a multi-layered sandwich. The surface was then paved with a layer of small pebbles mixed with tar, and a desert highway came into being. The plastic fabric serves to prevent the sand from shifting and loosening.

Road and Sand Undulating Together

Since the highway was built with sand, it easily becomes one with the sand, and undulates with the sand when it receives the weight of the vehicles. Driving over this desert highway gives one the feeling of rising and falling all the time. Standing on the highway, one can feel the rising and falling of the road when a vehicle drives past, especially if it is a heavy truck.

There are even more simple methods for building a temporary highways in the desert. The roadbed is laid with plastic frames, which are placed on the roughly smoothed surface of the desert and filled with sand. When the sand has been pressed firm, it becomes a highway. No road can be built as quickly as this kind of makeshift highway.

1. The branch road of the highway leading to oilfields deep in the desert (by Sun Jiabin)
2. The highway trembles when a heavy vehicle moves on it. (by Sun Jiabin)
3. Drivers on their arduous journey find some warmth in a desert inn.
4. The inn keeper was the first man to move his home deep into the desert.
5. A small town may spring into existence here in the future.
6. The generator installed by the innkeeper himself is crude but practical.
7. This temporary desert road was built with square plastic frames filled with sand. (by Zhao Chengan)



For a highway to survive in the desert, it is necessary to fight against the wind and fix the sand – day in and day out.

Water is the greatest enemy of ordinary highways. A downpour may give rise to floods, which often destroy the roadbed or cause a disastrous mud and rock flow.

A highway in the desert is never threatened by water because the Taklimakan has an annual precipitation of only a few millimetres. But wind is the greatest threat. Sandstorms have buried innumerable villages and towns, not to speak of an unsheltered highway.

The fight to protect the highway against wind and sand began with its construction.

A Network of Reed Stems

Wind blows every day in all seasons of the year in the Taklimakan. A light wind blows grains of sand rustling over the surface of the desert. A sandstorm will carry hundreds of tons of sand into the air. When it abates, the place will be buried in sand a metre deep. Some explorers have been killed and buried in the sand in this kind of sandstorm.

It is not humanly possible to conquer the wind and sand once and for all. There are, however, ways to protect the highway against wind and sand. As we followed the highway deep into the desert, we saw that the sand dunes on either side of the highway were covered with a network of squares made of bound reed stems planted in the sand, each square about a foot on a side. This

network of squares extends from north to south for over 300 kilometres, and serves to fix the sand in place and prevent it from encroaching upon the highway.

Wind Shelter and Highway Patrolters

On the outer edge of the network of squares is a wind-sheltering "wall" built with bundles of reeds or with plastic fabrics, which allow wind to blow through but keep sand away from the highway.

Even the network of squares and the wall cannot prevent small piles of sand from encroaching upon the highway. If these sand piles are not cleared away in time, the highway will be cut up into sections

within two weeks.

A patrol truck with about a dozen patrolmen goes out every day and drops one of the patrolmen every 10 kilometres or so along the highway. The patrolman then clears away the sand on his section of the highway. At the end of the day, the truck comes back to pick the patrolmen up and take them home. Since this is done every day, the surface of the highway is always shining and clear.

1. A wall of plastic net is built to prevent wind bringing sand to the highway.
2. A worker on patrol clearing sand off the highway
3. Reeds are arranged evenly on the ground and then pushed into the sand with shovels. (by Zhao Chengan)
4. Reeds are planted on both sides of the highway to fix the sand and prevent it from encroaching upon the road.







"Petroleum Island" Deep in the Desert

The discovery of petroleum has brought the highway into existence.
The "Petroleum Island" has given life to the "Sea of Death".

A Town Ablaze with Lights

At dusk, when we were halfway through the desert highway, there appeared a fork in the road. We drove onto the road that branched off to the east and deeper into the desert. The sand hollows were dyed crimson by the setting sun. Suddenly, a blaze of lights caught our eye. It glared deep in the basin in the evening.

This is the "Petroleum Island", the central Tarim headquarters of the Tarim Oilfields.

We could not believe our eyes when we saw, on the "Sea of Death", a "town" formed by as many as 100 mobile homes and 100 desert vehicles and container trucks parked in neat criss-crossed lines, making up the "streets" of the "town". There were people coming and going in the "streets" under bright street lights.

When we went into one of the trucks, we found ourselves in a T-shaped passage with offices, conference rooms, reception rooms, recreational spaces, canteen, kitchen, bathroom, toilet and guest rooms on either side. Each room was equipped with an air-conditioner for both cooling and heating.

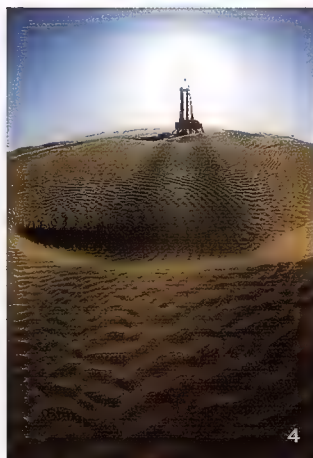


A Shower Every Day in the Desert

Our hosts provided us with food and lodging. Before going to bed, we each took a shower. As soon as the tap was turned on, warm water came out in generous streams. Where does the water come from? A waterworks in the "town" pumps alkaline water from under the desert and purifies it to supply the residents with water for production and daily life day and night.

Drinking water is brought in by a large water tank from outside the desert. There is also a 15-ton refrigeration truck for transporting meat, vegetables and drinks from distant places.

The Petroleum Island has very convenient communications facilities. The oilfields headquarters spends tens of thousands of yuan a year renting an Asian communications satellite channel to ensure smooth communication with other parts of China and the rest of the world. People can also watch television programmes. Lying in bed with a remote controller. We found, to our surprise, that there were programmes on six or seven channels.

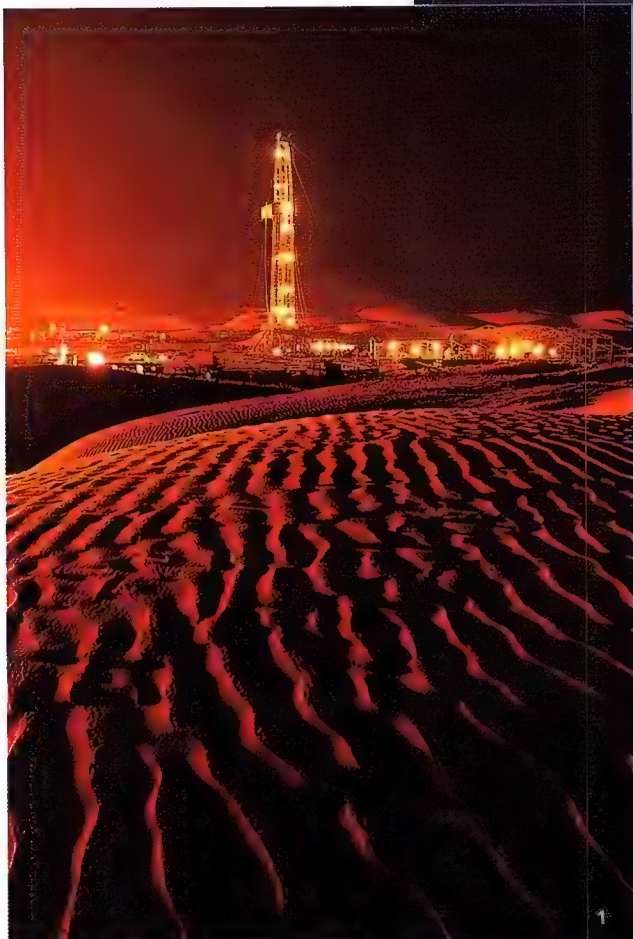


The Great Desert and the Oil Fields

The great Taklimakan Desert in Tarim Basin in southern Xinjiang is more than 330,000 square kilometres in area, or more than 300 times the size of Hong Kong. It is the world's second largest desert. The desert also moves fast. As the sand dunes roll forward with the wind, the desert expands continually.

But the great desert is rich in natural resources. Surveys show that buried in the desert are 10.76 billion tons of oil and 8,390 billion cubic metres of natural gas, making the desert one of the few practically untapped large oil basins in the world. Along the desert highway, a 302-kilometre-long oil and gas pipeline has been laid to reach Oilfield No.4 in the heart of the desert.

1. Petroleum Island, the headquarters of the Tarim Oilfields, deep in the desert.
2. The newly laid 302-kilometre oil pipeline (by Zhao Chengan)
3. Mobile homes have replaced tents since the desert highway came into existence.
4. Petroleum has given the "Sea of Death" a new lease of life. (by Song Shijing)

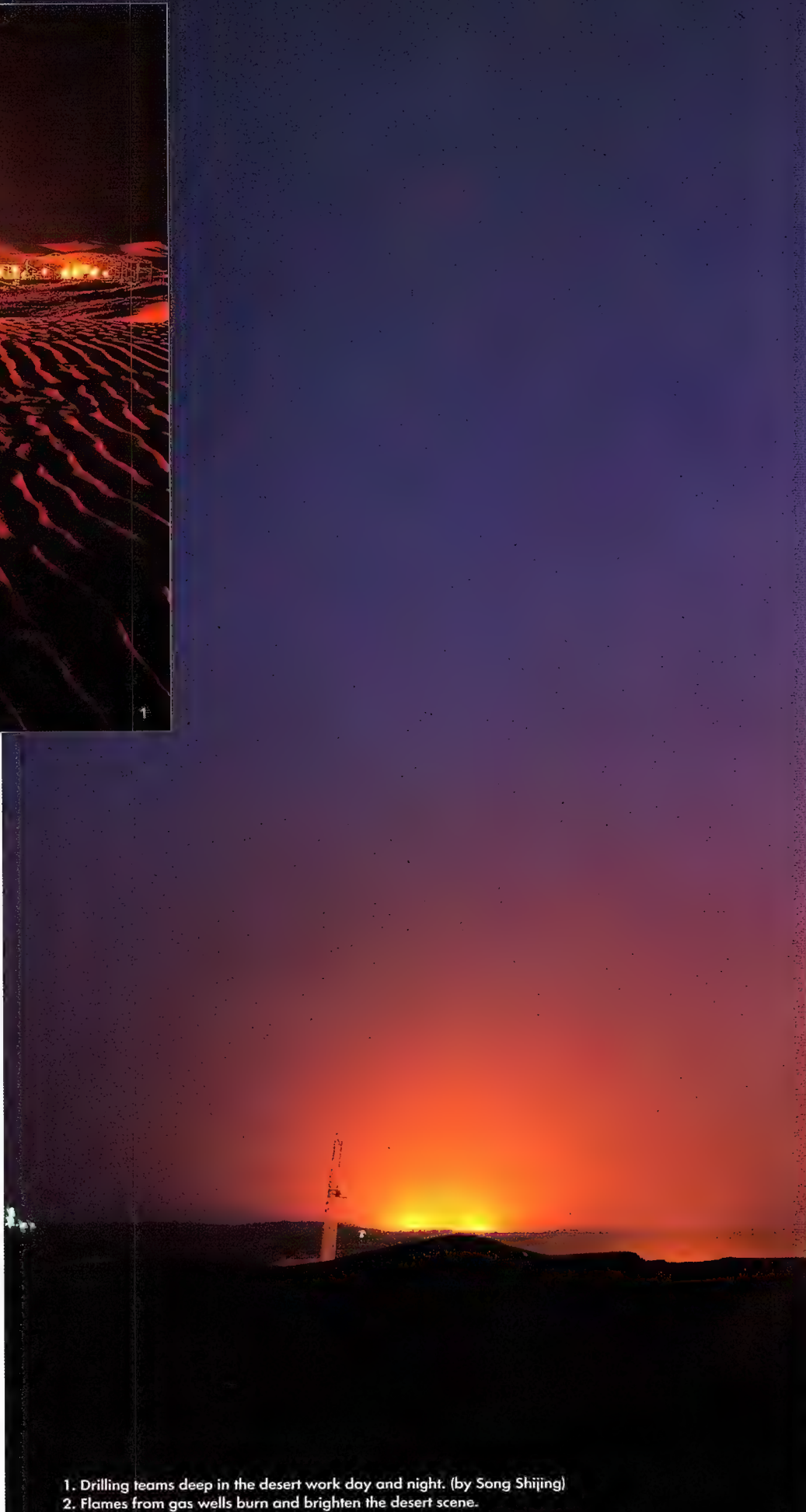


Bright Fire in the Desert

After supper, we drove to the top of a sand hill on the edge of the "town" and saw two large flames burning on distant sand dunes brightly illuminate the sky and the ground, making even the texture of the sand dunes discernible. These were flames from natural gas wells.

There were other lights at night deep in the vast desert, too. Lights at the oil derricks in the distance twinkled like stars. Through the moving air currents over the desert, they winked continually, looking mysterious.

When we got out of the truck in the early morning to inhale a few lungfuls of fresh air, we heard the sound of an aeroplane. Raising our heads, we saw that a propeller aeroplane was taking off outside the "town". There was also a grey helicopter with long propeller blades silently parked on the sand. These were the means of transportation for other "petroleum islands" scattered here and there deep in the Taklimakan Desert.



1. Drilling teams deep in the desert work day and night. (by Song Shijing)
2. Flames from gas wells burn and brighten the desert scene.



Green Hope for Tomorrow

If the highway is to survive and if the "Petroleum Island" is to prosper, planting grass and trees is the only hope for tomorrow. Specialists have planted grass to turn the desert green.



An ancient book vividly describes a scene deep in the Taklimakan Desert: "There were no birds flying overhead and no animals prowling below. I looked as far as the eye could see for a way out. The only landmarks I could see were the dry bones of dead men." This shows that the desert was a lifeless, desolate and dangerous place without a touch of green. The bones of pioneers warned anyone who dared to venture into it.

This picture of death is about to be revised. There are now not only a smooth highway and "Petroleum Islands" but also grass and trees planted by specialists. These specialists have actually succeeded in growing grass and trees in an area of about two acres in the desert, officially called "Desert Greening Research Base". The plantations are not far from the "Petroleum Island". This patch of green relieves the eye from the monotonous yellow sand, and gives one an impression of the south. There are 45 species planted here, including Chinese tamarisk, persican saxoul, calligonum and Mongolian ammopiptanthus. All of these are shrubs and trees resistant to drought, saline and alkaline soil, and windstorms.

A Garden of Vegetables and Flowers

A specialist from the Lanzhou Research Institute of Desert Plants told us that the research base in the desert was established three years ago and manned by a permanent staff of 18.

We could see that watermelons and muskmelons were already bearing fruit in the experimental fields. Some of them were as large as a football. There was also a garden, where flowers of all colours were in full bloom and looked particularly enchanting in the yellow sand. In a



shed covered with plastic sheets were eggplants, cucumbers, green peppers, kidney beans and tomato plants laden with fruits that were invitingly red or green, slender or round.

After bidding farewell to Petroleum Island, we returned to the boundless expanse of yellow sand. The place is still called the Taklimakan, but it now implies "death" to a much lesser degree. As life begins to germinate and spread – there is hope for tomorrow!



Tips for the Traveller:

How to get to the desert highway?

1. You can join a desert-crossing and southern Xinjiang tour group organised by the branch of China Travel Service, China International Travel Service or China Youth Travel Service in the city of Ürümqi.
2. You can hire a taxi and go wherever you like. The fare is about 800 yuan a day.
3. You can take a long-distance bus, which saves a great deal of money. But you will lose your freedom to move about, and the bus is often crowded.

What is the best season?

Autumn (September and October) is the best season. The weather will be fine, with less wind. The temperature is also agreeable. As the poplar leaves begin to turn yellow, the scenery becomes more beautiful.

Points for attention.

1. Take food, water and fruit with you. There are small shops selling drinking water, but it is rather expensive because of the long-distance transportation. Those who are not accustomed to the mutton served in the small eating places should carry some fast food.
2. Suntan lotion and lipsalve are indispensable.

1. A vegetable greenhouse on the "Sea of Death" (by Song Shijing)
2. Surprisingly, there is water three to five metres beneath the surface of the desert, which enables trees and grass to grow. (by Zhao Chengan)
3. The "green base" at the Petroleum Island is a precious garden in the desert. (by Zhao Chengan)

沙漠公路位置圖
Location Map of the Desert Highway





CHALLENGES

Mt. Zimei as viewed from Gongga Temple



Exploring the

Southern Slope of Mount Gongga

Photos & Article by
Gai Mingsheng, Sun Youbin

We decided to make the assault on Mount Gongga partly out of our fascination with the mountain and partly as a challenge to our own willpower and spiritual stamina.

It was early autumn when we sped to the northern slope of Gongga, but it was already enveloped in that heavy fog you can find only on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. From the summit to the valley below, the fog permeated every nook and cranny, without the least sign of dissipating. We had to change course and turn to the southern slope.

The deep Lesser Golden River fault fissure at Longmenshan, north of Shimian County, is the axis of the Kangdian earth axis which determined the formation of the Hengduan Mountains. We nicknamed it the "umbilical cord". At Caoke Township, which would be the "navel", we found the "entrance" to Gongga's southern slope. Mount Gongga is the source of the Moxi River, which flows into the Tianwan River. Then, after running a distance of 85.6 kilometres, the river makes a half circle around the mountain and finally merges with the Dadu River. This only shortcut to the southern slope of Gongga runs through a no-man's-land covering nearly a thousand square kilometres. Untrodden by man, the valley has retained its primitive morphology. The very sight of it generated an indescribable fear among the ranks of our small expedition.

November 4

Today, we launched out on our exploration of Mount Gongga's southern slope. It will be a tough journey, but a stimulating one, I'm sure.

There are nine of us. The leader of the group is Su Xiaohua, an army veteran, very capable and physically strong. Among the members are several painters and photographers, plus a few locals recruited to help carry the luggage and food.

November 5

Today, we came to a place called Jinwo, or Golden Nest, inhabited by just a couple of families. We stayed in the home of a primary school teacher by the name of Wang. One of the





1. Sisters of a Tibetan family
(by Sun Youbin)
2. Trudging on a suspense bridge in
Caoke Township (by Sun Youbin)
3. Forests turning silvery white in the late
autumn (by Gai Mingsheng)
4. Refreshing air in the primeval forests
(by Gai Mingsheng)

few in the village with some degree of education, he has earned himself great prestige by installing a small electric motor by the spring behind his house. The pitiful amount of electricity it generates, however, is only enough to light his own house. His two sons are in school. The family owns several cows and pigs. His wife, clearly very capable, told us they raise the pigs in order to pay for their sons' tuition.

Two bridges on the only road had been swept away by a flood. There was no other way but to find someone to rebuild them. Su managed to get the locals to have them ready in one day. While we waited, we decided to have a look around in the nearby ravine.

On one dried-up riverbed, we saw many rocks quite unique in shape and colour, whereupon we appropriately named it the "Golden Rock Beach". I picked up one of the pebbles and was surprised to find written on it – or so it seemed – the Chinese character *yao*, meaning "far away".

November 6

The bridges were rebuilt, and we resumed our journey early in the morning. Chen, slightly older than the rest of us, went ahead with firm strides, carrying the various apparatus, while the others followed with tents and food – essentials for the 20-day journey. The Tianwan River was very attractive indeed, and we stopped every now and then to take in its beauty. At one point, we tried to climb up a huge rock in the middle of the river, but it was too high for us. So we found a log and laid it against the rock. While I held it in place, Gai climbed up to the top. He had walked just a few steps when the rock began to sway. It really gave me a scare! Gai decided to call it "The Rock Crossing the River". Who knows how many years this rock has been on the move, finally being swept into the river. And who knows how many more years it will take before it reaches the opposite shore! What astonished us even more were the single pine and single azalea tree that had struck root in this rock. You could see their roots pushing their way through the cracks like a dragon and a snake. The rock was covered with a thick layer of moss. When the waves splashed against the rock face, you would hear a deafening roar from the rock while spray and vapour scattered in the air. Moved by the force of nature and



ignoring the risk of falling into the river, we took up position at a point just above the water, and with one hand grabbing onto the roots of the trees, we took photo after photo, trying hard to steady the camera in the other hand. This was actually easier than trying to use a tripod in such circumstances.

November 7

I woke up to find myself lying in a pool of water. What had happened was that it began to rain lightly last night, and as my "berth" was right on top of a depression in the ground, water had started to collect under my bedding. There was nothing I could do but wait for day to dawn while listening to the roar of the river and the hooting of an owl not far away. After everyone was up, we hurried on, intending to reach Gongga before the weather there changed. That was no easy thing to do, negotiating a road that was hardly a path at all. We had to slash our way through thick bushes, clinging to vines and trees to avoid falling down steep cliffs into what seemed to be bottomless ravines. Furthermore, there was always the threat of an overhanging rock falling on you at any moment. And in the eerie virgin forests, you could easily lose your direction. We kept calling each other's names and tried hard to follow the footprints of those before us. At dusk, we arrived at Bawang Sea. We were told this was originally a beautiful highland lake, with tall trees reaching up to the sky from the water and shoreline. But today, we saw nothing but a "sea" of sand. Only narrow strips of water now cut across the greyish riverbed. Dead firs stood in silent testimony to the mountain's history. Here and there, we could see footprints of wild deer.

November 8

After several days without meeting a living soul, we came upon a family of three. The husband, Xu Shaoquan, is 61 years old and of Han nationality, while his wife, Qi Ah, 56, is Tibetan. At her invitation, we entered the small wooden cabin which was their home. We sat around a fire and talked while sipping the Tibetans' favourite drink – buttered tea. The old man's granddaughter, 20-year-old Daji Umu, sat next to her grandmother, knitting, with a sweet smile on her face and her big eyes shining with excitement and curiosity. It was a perfect setting for picture-taking. We took several photos of them. As we had to use slow speed, I kept reminding them not to move. Everybody laughed at my awkward pronunciation of that Tibetan word.



1. Withered trunks look like performing dancers (by Gai Mingsheng)
2. Red Stone Beach (by Gai Mingsheng)

3. Marsh in a valley (by Gai Mingsheng)
4. Early snow on Mt. Huanhe
(by Gai Mingsheng)

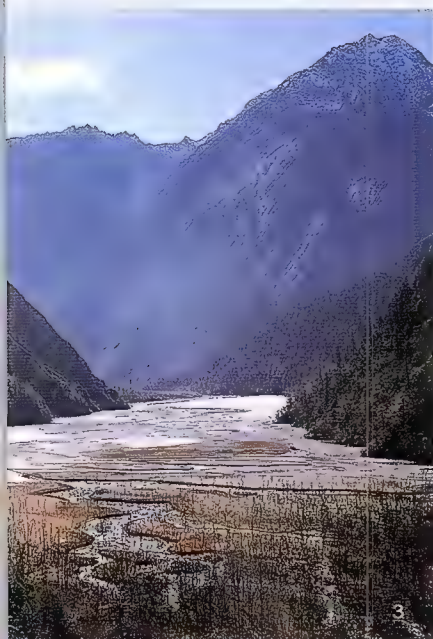
Needless to say, the family leads a very hard life generation after generation, with only the mountain behind them and a few cows and sheep, and almost totally cut off from the outside world. Yet there was no sign of sadness on their faces, but only smiles that came right straight from the heart. They breathe air that is fresh and clean, and what they harvest is the joy of spirit. I actually envied them, for they seem to live a happier life than that of modern man, with a heart that is peaceful and serene and undisturbed by stress and insomnia.

November 9

Today, we found a cave with lots of argali sheep horns and hooves strewn on the ground. Apparently, the place had been visited by poachers hunting rare and precious animals. We then plodded through a virgin forest of broadleaf trees found only in the frigid-temperate zone. It was a refreshing and rather mysterious experience. The tall, straight firs of a variety of species, interspersed here and there with groves of bamboo and azalea, were clothed in a mantle of velvety, green moss, caused by heavy moisture in the air. Streaks of sunlight pierced through the treetops, gilding the vines that girded the tree trunks. Whenever a cool autumn breeze swept through the forest, the whole valley echoed with its sighing. Since the place abounds in water, we found ourselves frequently passing streams and waterfalls drifting down from between two peaks, with names such as Water of the Gods, Soul Mountain Waterfall and Flying Water, and others that tumbled down steep precipices, creating a series of majestic sights, such as the Black Water Beach, Axe Gate, Bailou Mountain and the Ape's Falls. As we lifted our eyes to admire the cascading water, we felt as if our hearts were touching the sky, and we were intoxicated.

At noontime, we came to a place called Mugang Ridge. An old woman by the roadside invited us to her house for tea. It was impossible to resist her hospitality. This vast open area is sparsely populated and is seldom visited by outsiders, so that whenever someone passes through, he or she is bound to be welcomed into the house for a cup of tea and stay awhile to tell them the latest news from outside. When we told them that one day a highway would reach this area and bring tourists from outside, they were very happy and said they would look forward to it.

We spent the night with a Tibetan family named Aini. After several days eating and sleeping outdoors, it was such a treat sleeping on a wooden bed.



November 10

Since a lot of our time was spent crossing no-man's-land, there was no lack of path-blazing and bridge-building. This made the journey more difficult, but also more interesting. It is fascinating to watch the mountain people build a bridge. They are very good and fast at it. A few hacks with an axe and they have felled a tree. Put two logs together and bind them with a strip of bamboo bark. Then, with a long rope, lower the logs down onto the opposite bank and the bridge is ready for crossing. Sometimes, there is only one log but with railings on both sides. Sometimes, one railing does the trick. They also have a kind of bridge woven with rattan which they call "Basket Bridge", or a "Sliding Bridge" built of bamboo poles. They decide which kind to build according to the material on hand. No need for brain-racking over the design. Do it the way you feel like and in a jiffy, it's done. Our painter, Sun, couldn't help expressing his astonishment at the ingenuity of the



mountain people who, without realising it, were creating such masterpieces of modern art.

After seven days of difficult trekking, we finally arrived around noon at Gongga Monastery on the southern slope of Mount Gongga's main peak. In the extremely crude circumstances, the lamas in this monastery rotate in chanting the sutras, each shift being responsible for performing the ritual for two or three months. Zuo, an elderly lama who looks after the monastery year round, seemed to be a very honest, kindly man. At 59, he has been at this post for 11 years. He has never descended the mountain, relying entirely on other people to bring him food and daily essentials from downhill. When I offered him the only two oranges I had left with me, his eyes opened wide as he stared at the fruit. I saw his mouth twitch at the corner and there was surprise mixed with joy on his face. His hands trembled as he carefully put them inside the folds of his robe.



I'm sure he had not seen such fruit for years. We also gave him some chocolates, garlic and other things which he gladly accepted. Inside his house, we were offered buttered tea and a kind of cake made of highland barley. Gratitude aside, my heart was filled with an indescribable feeling.

At dusk, we mounted the hilltop behind the monastery to photograph the sunset on Gongga. A bitter wind was blowing; our hands and feet were numb from the cold, yet we felt a warmth inside us as we witnessed the setting sun cast its red glow on the mountain peaks. Starting our descent after completing the task, we discovered that Zimei Mountain behind us, now wrapped in snow, was directly opposite the Gongga Summit. From there we could surely capture a panoramic view. Without hesitation, we decided to ascend Mount Zimei the following morning.

1. Mt. Gongga in the setting sun
(by Gai Mingsheng)
2. A hunter's hut (by Gai Mingsheng)
3. Lama Zuo has not come down Mt.
Gongga for 11 years. (by Sun Youbin)

November 11

Early next morning, we found the valley and all the mountain peaks around shrouded in heavy fog. The Gongga Summit – clearly visible yesterday – was no more. How fortunate we were to have taken those pictures yesterday! As we took leave of the monastery, Zuo said to us in broken Han language, "Please, would you take a picture of me and Mount Gongga?" "Of course." I immediately complied and took two. The distant mountains are hardly discernible on account of the fog, but his weather-beaten face is clearly imprinted on the photo. It embodies the deep emotion he cherishes for the mountain and the monastery he guards. Surely I will try to send a copy of it to him.

We came to Qiaotou Village at the foot of the mountain. There were a few households, and a primary school with a dozen or so students. As there was no one in our group who had climbed Zimei Mountain before, we asked a local Tibetan to act as our guide. Only four of us joined, the others waiting for us at Weishida. We hired five horses. Then, we each gulped down a bowl of instant noodles and began our journey. As we took off, we discovered an extra member in our party. A colt insisted on tagging along with his mother, refusing to stay behind no matter how hard we tried to make it. So, we let it come along.

The road became ever more hazardous and seemed never to end. As we zigzagged up the slope, I suddenly recalled the rock I had picked up from the river bed at the place called Golden Rock Beach that bore what appeared to be the character for "far away". There must be something in that! After several hours of strenuous climbing, we finally arrived at the top of Zimei Mountain. Even the horses were sweating all over. I slipped from the horse onto the ground, my legs sore and numb. At close to 6,000 metres above sea level, Mount Zimei presented magnificent scenery – a contemporary glacier formed by a series of ice peaks. The top of Mount Zimei was covered with ice and snow. In the piercing wind, we selected our positions, readied the cameras and waited for the best shooting time.

At half past three, clouds and fog began to force their way through the mountain pass into the ravine. Gradually, they gathered and elevated themselves to cover the whole valley and all the mountain peaks around. After a while, this whole mass of cloud and fog started to bob up and down. We looked far into the distance and there, rising above the clouds, was the entire Gongga Mountain range set against a cloudless blue sky, taking the whole universe into its embrace.

Around 4:50 p.m. Gongga was clad in the red of burning charcoal as the sea of clouds beneath it danced vivaciously. This was Mount Gongga in all its magnificence. At 5:05 p.m., suddenly, the splendour was gone. A faint glow in the horizon turned the sky into a silver expanse, and a deep blue line silhouetted the Gongga Mountain. We held our breath. Only the clicking of the cameras broke the reigning silence.

The temperature was dropping fast. Our fingers were stiff from the freezing cold. We packed our things, readied the horses and quickly headed downhill. But suddenly, the mare I was riding stopped dead in her tracks and neighed over and over again – she had lost her baby. We continued on our way, but the mother kept on neighing for her baby. It got darker and darker. All we could see up front was the faint light from Buque's flashlight and from Gai's cigarette butt. All of a sudden, the mare started, and with another long neigh, threw me off her back and over the precipice. For a moment, I thought this was the end. Then everything went blank. Then, I saw a flash of light – they had come to search for me. After being rescued and back on the track, I looked down over the cliff and saw that I had fallen on a cluster of azalea trees that jutted out from the precipice.



1. One way of spending the long night (by Gai Mingsheng)
2. The foggy Renzhong Haiwei Lake (by Gai Mingsheng)
3. The Ape Falls (by Gai Mingsheng)
4. An eclectically built bridge (by Sun Youbin)



November 14

After being on the road for a whole day yesterday, we arrived today at Sandaoqiao to photograph the Apeman's Falls. Situated at the boundary between the three counties of Shimian, Kangding and Jiulong, the topography here is characterised by a deep fall of at least 2,000 metres between the peak and the bottom of the valley, resulting in a high velocity of flow of the area's rivers. What is unique about the Apeman's Falls is that instead of cascading down the cliff, the water spurts out every now and then, creating a mist and thunderous roars. Gai and I put up a tent at the foot of a rock. Somehow, Gai felt there was something wrong. We went out and were shocked to find that half the tent was hanging over the cliff. There was nothing beneath the grass and shrubs to which we had nailed the tent.

We were running out of supplies. The two locals whom we had sent downhill to fetch some replenishments failed to return as scheduled. And those who went off in search of them returned empty-handed. We had to cut our rations. Outside, without our realising it, it had started to snow. The whole landscape was now clad in white.

November 15

We woke up to find that an overhanging rock was ready to fall down on us at any minute. We quickly packed and took leave of this hazardous spot for a safer place. After settling down, we waited for the locals to return. Even instant noodles were down to only a few packages. We had no alternative but to send two more young men down to the village to find some food.

November 18

At last, the food came. Relieved from the threat of hunger, we went on our way till we arrived at Renzhong Haiwei. Thanks to the snow, the mountains had shed their autumn colours and put on their winter attire. In the mist, Mount Haizi had acquired quite an extraordinary look. We quickly put up a hut with some logs and straw and, after a brief rest, set about taking pictures again until twilight set in. The night seemed especially long. Perhaps it was because we would be heading for home early next morning and would be back in Jinwo within a day. It had been two weeks since we started our journey and I was beginning to feel homesick.

The Gongga – a Holy Mountain in My Heart

Article by Gai Mingsheng

Mt. Gongga, located on the eastern rim of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, is the highest peak in the Hengduan Mountains. Rising 7,556 metres above sea level, it is reputed to be the "King of the Mountains". Chinese and foreign geologists have described the Hengduan Mountains and the Mt. Gongga area as "an unrivalled masterpiece of nature" and "a geographical unit unique not only in China but in the world as well".

Owing to the dislocation of the Hengduan Mountains, Mt. Gongga was able, after undergoing the Quaternary Glacial Period, to miraculously preserve to this day 71 glaciers and various species of flora and fauna extinct elsewhere. Strewn in its valleys are huge rocks of all shapes and sizes, rapids and waterfalls, presenting an unparalleled geographical phenomenon. Still half hidden behind its mystic veil, Gongga attracts both Chinese and foreign scientists, explorers, artists and anthropologists. But to me, Gongga is not simply a geological attraction; it is a holy spiritual mountain. In fact, "Gong" in Tibetan means ice and snow and "ga" means white. What an appropriate name for this mountain so sacred and pure! Legend has it that three tribes used to argue over which of the three peaks of Mount Gongga was sacred. Later, Daba, a clever sorcerer of the Mosuos, revealed the wish of Buddha, saying that Jade Mountain (which is endowed with day) represents the Tibetans; Golden Mountain (which is endowed with sunset) represents the Mosuos; and Silver Mountain of the Moon represent the Hans. This delighted all.

Tips for the Traveller

Only those who are physically energetic and imbued with the spirit of the explorer should go to Mt. Gongga, and by no means alone. They should first go to Chengdu and then take a bus to Shimian, a distance of 370 kilometres. Considering the amount of luggage one has to carry – tent, sleeping bag, cooking utensils, warm clothing, etc. – it is best to rent a car. After arriving at Chaoke Township in Shimian, you must ask an experienced local to be your guide and enlist a few others to help with the luggage. From there, proceed on foot along the Tianwan River.

The landscape along the southern slope of Mt. Gongga is totally untouched and extremely charming.

TASTING SEAFOOD AT BEIDAIHE

Photo & Article by Shan Xiaogang



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People in South China's coastal province Guangdong believe they know how to prepare the best seafood, but Northerners think otherwise. They cite the seafood at Beidaihe as an example. Let's then take a look at what Beidaihe has to offer.

Suozi Crabs, Reminiscence of Classic Novel

In the heat of summer, you can lie on the beach and sunbathe at Beidaihe, a seaside summer resort northeast of Beijing. When the heat becomes too much, just take a dip in the welcoming sea to cool down. Beidaihe is an ideal spot for escaping the summer heat and a visit there fills one with pleasure from morning to evening. Then, when you are hungry, you may go for a hearty seafood meal.

Prawns and crabs are special delicacies at Beidaihe, a coastal city in Hebei Province where the Daihe and Luanhe rivers empty into the Bohai Sea. The freshwater carried down by these rivers contains abundant food for sea creatures, who find here a good hearth. As a result, prawns from this area, large in size with tender, delicious meat, are considered by many to be the best of all prawns. Crabs from the

sea at Beidaihe are known as the Sanyou Suozi Crabs. The mature female crabs, before they spawn, are a most attractive delicacy. The crabs eaten by Jia Baoyu, the hero in the classic novel *A Dream of the Red Mansions*, and Xue Baochai, the girl he eventually married, were none other than the Sanyou Suozi Crabs. It is so delicious that it is not surprising that Jia Baoyu described its meat as something people could eat so much of, even at the expense of their health.

One should go to a restaurant early to try out the seafood because otherwise, in my experience, it would not be easy to get a seat for dinner in a good restaurant. It is not a good idea to arrive late for dinner as prawns and crabs may then be all sold out.

Steamed Crabs and Fried Prawns

In one street, I see a row of a dozen or so seafood restaurants. Outside each, there was about a dozen large red buckets displaying fresh sea creatures. I asked the owner of one restaurant if he had Suozi Crabs and large prawns and he replied "Yes, we have the freshest!" In one of the large red buckets, I discovered about 10 different kinds of



shell fish and, for a while, I could not make up my mind what to eat. Finally, I selected several at random and eagerly awaited my meal.

From my experience of seafood in this area, the Sanyou Suozi Crabs are the best. When choosing, select one that is alive and heavy – male are best during the summer season as they have more meat. As for the prawns, choose the Kao Prawns, which are so big that a few would make a kilogram. They are delicious when deep fried!

A Hundred Tastes

First came the appetisers of fried clams and snails, after which the main dishes arrived at my table. The golden colour of the deep-fried Kao Prawns made my mouth water and, when a sauce made of ginger, onion, carrot shreds, tomato sauce, sugar, salt, starch and wine was poured over them, my nostrils were assailed with an enticing aroma. I took a bite of a prawn, which was crispy outside and tender inside, and my mouth was filled with a combination of sweet, salty, spicy, sour, refreshing and succulent tastes. The next to come was the steamed Suozi Crabs whose shredded white meat filled the inside of the shells. The meat, eaten with a sauce of raw ginger shreds, soy sauce and sesame oil, was so delicious that there are not enough words to describe it.

The two main courses of prawns and crabs were followed by



mantis shrimps, cuttlefish and other seafood whose taste I cannot remember, simply because they came after so many other delicacies.

Most of the seafood restaurants in Beidaihe are to be found at Laohuya and the Evening Food Streets.



Translated by F. Huang

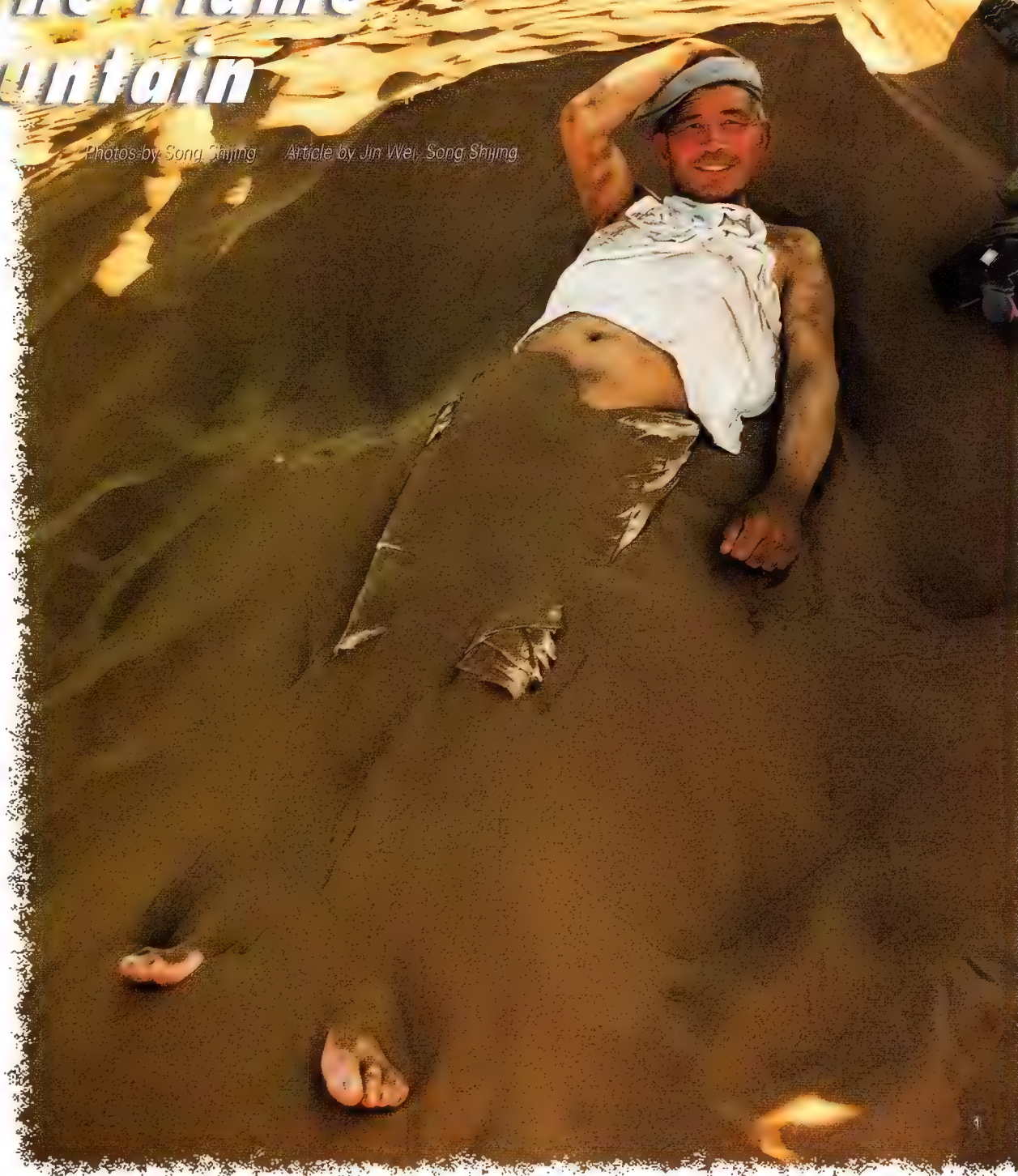
1. Appetising Suozi Crabs
2. At this food court, all delicacies are freshly prepared.
3. Prawns from Bohai Bay – best of all!
4. In the evening, all seats are taken by seafood diners.



SPECIAL TOURS

Receiving Sand Therapy in the Flame Mountain

Photos by Song Shijing Article by Jin Wei, Song Shijing





1. An old man receiving the mysterious sand therapy
2. Isn't it too hot burying the body in sand at a temperature of 40°C ?
3. A doctor of the Sand Therapy Centre checking the condition of his patients

Just imagine how hot Turpan is!

The Miraculous Sand Therapy

Before long we came to Ya'erhu Township near Turpan, the best place to have sand therapy. As we gazed into the distance, a vast stretch of yellow sand dunes came into sight. Waves of hot air blew on our faces, and sweat began to stream down our cheeks. But the perspiration evaporated quickly. As we took off our shoes and walked in the soft sand, which was over 40°C, an unspeakably mysterious feeling arose in me.

Soon, we found the sands underfoot too hot to walk on barefooted, so we put on our shoes again. Before long, big colourful umbrellas — yellow, red, blue and green — came into sight, as if we had arrived at a magnificent beach in summertime. Only when we walked closer did we find that it was the Turpan Sand Therapy Centre. Compared with ordinary hospitals and clinics, this health centre looks very different. There were no high buildings, no advanced equipment, and not even many doctors bustling around. But it is the largest therapy centre in China in terms of scale.

The in-patient department of the Sand Therapy Centre was located


When we entered the Turpan Basin, we immediately saw the Flame Mountain that undulates for over 100 kilometres from east to west. Viewed from the distance, the peaks of brown sand stone rise, one higher than the other, looking like burning flames under the golden sunshine. As soon as we got out of the car, we felt the heat. The air was burning our faces, and the ground was as hot as a steamer. No wonder the place has been given the nickname, "Stove Within Stove".



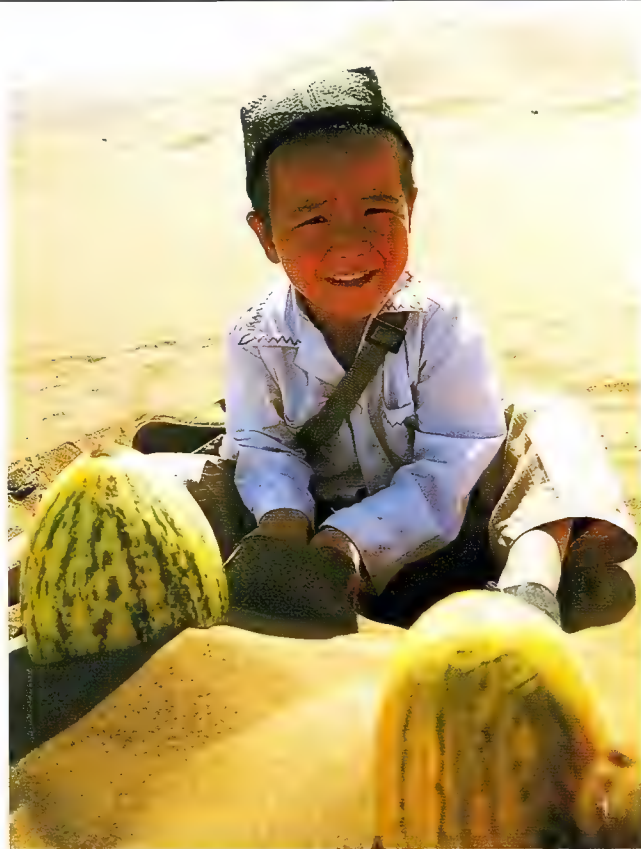
on the undulating sand dunes that ran for several dozen miles. Half-naked men and women, each with a towel on his or her head, buried their bodies in the sand to receive the warmth of the hot, fine sand. Drinking water was put beside them, and from time to time they drank the water in big mouthfuls to replace the loss of water evaporated from their bodies. Some of the patients were accompanied by their families. While burying their bodies in the sand, they ate watermelons and chatted with their dear ones.

Here, we happened to meet an old man, Kurban, and his family. Because of long years of hard labour, Kurban had suffered from arthritis and backache. He had seen doctors in many hospitals, but had not found an effective treatment. At the suggestion of his friends, he came here to try the sand therapy and found the result wonderful. After receiving a 20-day treatment, his condition improved a lot. So he decided to stay for further treatment. Kurban was not alone here. He had his family keep him company. During the day, they ate and chatted with him under the same large umbrella.

Was it really effective or was this a psychological factor? We wondered. A doctor there told us that sand therapy is theoretically the same as infrared radiation, wax therapy and physiotherapy in modern medical science. It helps the metabolism of the cells of the body and has been proved effective in treating rheumatism. The Turpan Basin is an ideal place to have heat therapy.

After hearing this, I could not wait to bury myself in the sand too. While I was taking off my clothes, the doctor came up and stopped me. I was warned that it was dangerous to have sand therapy offhand, and, because the evaporation is great when the body is buried in the sand, one must have enough water and food before commencing treatment. Moreover, the temperature at the moment was too high. The best times to have sand therapy are during the periods 11:00-14:00 and 17:00-20:00. 

1. Little children are left to keep watch over the watermelon while grown-ups are having sand therapy.
2. These people seem to have no lower parts to their bodies.
3. Local people often come to have the mysterious sand therapy.



TIPS FOR THE TRAVELLER

Location and Transport: Turpan is located in the middle of Xinjiang. Its city proper is 184 kilometres from Urūmqi, and can be reached by train or by bus from Urūmqi. The journey takes about three hours. The Sand Therapy Centre is 16 kilometres from the city centre, and there is a shuttle minibus between the centre and the city.

Climate: The highest average temperature from June to August is over 38°C. Since the air humidity is low, it is not sultry.

Sand Therapy: The season for sand therapy is from mid-June to early August, and the best times are from 11:00 to 14:00 and from 17:00 to 20:00. Therapeutic rooms, wards and accommodation are available.



200 Springs Found, Jinan

Some 200 springs have been discovered in Jinan, capital of Shandong Province. The city, with almost 500 springs, is also known as "the city of springs" and has a unique topography, with Mt. Taishan to the south and the Yellow River to the north. By the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) the city reportedly had 72 springs, which attracted numerous travellers and scholars.

Bridge Link Between Zhuhai and Macau

Construction of a bridge linking Macau and Zhuhai in Guangdong is expected to begin in March this year. The 1,100-metre, six-lane bridge will run from Hengqin Island in Zhuhai to Taipa Island in Macau. It is scheduled to be completed and put into operation before Macau returns to the motherland in December 1999. The project has been jointly designed by Chinese and Portuguese engineers, and the US\$50 million construction cost will be shared equally between the two cities.

Sea Routes Open, Beihai

This year, China's Guangxi Province will introduce a new tourist route covering four cities around Beibu Bay, including Beihai and Qinzhou of China, as well as Haiphong and Halong in Vietnam. Beihai is one of China's new tourist destinations and this four-day sea tour is expected to attract more tourists to this scenic city.

New Tour Itineraries, Chengdu

Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, has opened numerous new tour routes. These include Jiuzhaigou-Huanglong, Mount Leshan-Mount Emei-Dujiangyan-Mount Qingcheng, and a special tour to the Giant Panda's natural reserve. Sichuan has

many tourist resources. In addition to historical sites and scenic spots, there are also various cultural activities which reflect traditional folklore and modern local life, including the Zigong International Lantern Festival, the Leshan International Buddhist Festival and the Chengdu Flower Festival.

TV Series on Mt. Taishan, Shandong

A 15-part TV documentary on Mount Taishan is to be distributed in China and abroad. Mount Taishan is the most revered of China's five sacred mountains and is listed as a "World Natural and Cultural Heritage". Entitled *China's Mount Taishan*, the TV documentary depicts the mountain through scholars' comments, legends and stories. It also reflects Mount Taishan's significance in the development of Chinese history, philosophy, archaeology and literature.

Ancient Drum Found in Guangxi

A bronze drum from the Sui Dynasty (581-618) was recently discovered in Hengxian County, Guangxi. The drum, with a diameter of 0.645 metre, is 0.41 metre in height and weighs 30 kilograms. The face of the drum features four frogs surrounding the sun. This new finding will provide valuable clues for research into the history of the Zhuang ethnic group.

Wildlife Vigil, Jilin

Large numbers of black bears, wild boars and roe deer, as well as flocks of wild ducks and swan are being frequently spotted in the Changbai Mountains in Northeast China's Jilin Province. This is due to the ban on hunting implemented two years ago, in addition to a 50 percent expansion of forests and the popularisation of wild life knowledge among local people. Jilin is the country's only province to have enforced a hunting ban and it

has also established a first-aid centre for injured wild animals. Inhabiting the province are 600 kinds of animals, of which 66 are protected by the state.

Folk Art Preservation, Xinjiang

Measures are being adopted to protect the cultural heritage of unique folk art in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Xinjiang is inhabited by a number of Chinese ethnic groups and is famous for its colourful art forms that originated along the ancient Silk Road. In an effort to save these traditional art forms, local art groups invite folk artists to stage performances of ethnic minority songs and dances. Since the early 1980s, the region's art departments have made great efforts to compile and publish a series of collections covering local opera, traditional music, ethnic minority musical instruments, and folk songs and dances.

Wildlife Park, Shenyang

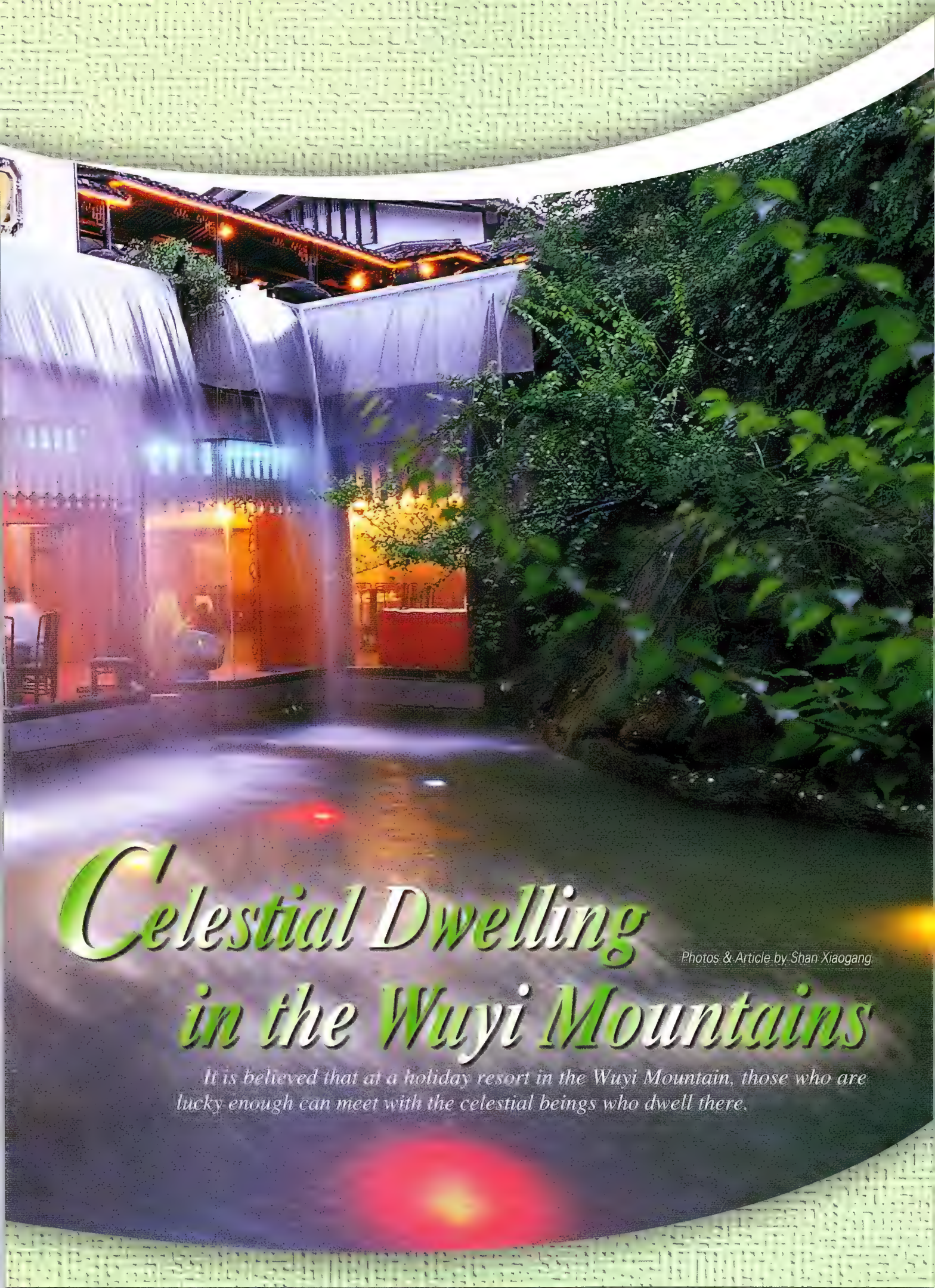
Shenyang, capital of Liaoning Province, plans to rebuild its wild animal park. The new park will cover an area of 3.3 million square metres. About 10,000 animals of 200 species will be raised in the park. The city's present wild animal park occupies only an area of 460,000 square metres.

Confucius Saloon Restored, Shanghai

The historical site of Chongming Academy, or the Confucius Saloon, has been restored in Shanghai. The academy, built during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), used to be a place where scholars commemorated and studied Confucian teachings. It underwent reconstruction several times in later dynasties. The existing houses were built in 1622 during the Ming Dynasty.

L E I S U R E

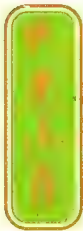




Celestial Dwelling in the Wuyi Mountains

Photos & Article by Shan Xiaogang

It is believed that at a holiday resort in the Wuyi Mountain, those who are lucky enough can meet with the celestial beings who dwell there.



It was summer when I visited the Wuyi Mountain Villa, and the rain had just stopped. As I was driving to the Mountain Villa along a highway that ran parallel to a stream, my eyes were fixed on the scenery that flashed by. To the left, a gurgling stream flowed deep and green while, on the right, trees grew so thick they formed a vertical screen of foliage. As the view shifted from one picture perfect scene to another, a gap suddenly appeared in the forest belt to reveal a stone pillar, on which were inscribed in green the Chinese characters "Wuyi Mountain Villa".

Rural Scene with South China Grace

Our car nosed its way slowly up a winding mountain path hemmed in between a belt of meta-sequoia trees and a cliff with trailing plants hanging down its surface. After a left turn, a cluster of buildings similar to northern Fujian country abodes, came into sight. The houses were widely scattered, and each was surrounded by a well-manicured lawn. A vast track of dense forest sheltered them from the din and traffic of the outside world.

The buildings are patterned on the local mountain dwellings. The contours of the terrain are employed with picturesque taste, with grass, trees, and springs being embroidered into a mosaic of superb natural loveliness.

I strolled into the finely furnished lobby, where lanterns, furniture and various interior decorations are generally fashioned out of bamboo, wood or stone produced in Wuyi Mountain. From there, I went to my room following a winding corridor, which conducted me first down a flight of stairs, then up the hillside.

At nightfall, lanterns are turned on and the otherwise plain looking whitewashed walls and black tiled roofs become a riot of colours. The ancient-style lanterns by the footpaths and on the corners of houses inspire a feeling of nostalgia and I was surprised to learn that they were all made of stone. In the guest rooms, the beds and tables are covered with batik, and the walls are graced with landscapes painted on wood. Soft light from the lamps hidden in the depth of bamboo tubes dye the room a light green colour.



Previous page: Outside the Xizhao Zhumu dining room, a waterfall pours down from a height of a dozen metres.

This page:

1. The walls and roofs of Wuyi Mountain Villa gleaming amidst rich foliage
2. Wuyi Mountain Villa is decorated with bamboo, trees and rocks.
3. Kaleidoscopic flush lights work wonders on the water curtain.
4. Decorations in the villa are all made of bamboo, wood and stone from Wuyi Mountain.



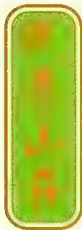
Celestial Peaks

The first rays of dawn had just appeared when I pushed open the door and went out onto the balcony to savour the fresh air. The villa was enveloped in a fog which thickened and thinned alternately, and at times the mountains, streams, trees, grass and rocks were all lost in the overwhelming mists, leaving only a few bamboo plants swaying in front of the window. However, it was not long before the rising sun dispelled the fog, and the charming landscape came back to life.

Standing on the lawn in front of the house, I gazed at the Wuyi Mountain to the west. I saw a skyline glorified by a blue smudge of statuesque peaks and mountain slopes pitted with impressive monoliths. The Dawang (Great King) Peak appears to be capped with a crown, while the Yunü (Jade Lass) Peak has a supple, maidenly carriage. The Manting (Curtained Pavilion) Peak looks like an incense burning tripod, and the Xianhe (Immortal Crane) Peak is shaped just like a crane. All these mountain prominences stand cheek by jowl in breathtaking array.

Skipping breakfast, I left the Mountain Villa and trekked southwards for several hundred metres, after which I turned west and went into a dense forest. There I followed a paved path which leads to the tallest peak on Wuyi Mountain, the Dawang Peak. On the way, I passed string of tourist spots, such as the Zhangxian (Immortal Zhang) Rock, Ladder to the Clouds, Stone Gateway, Hanbi Spring, Shengzhen Temple, and Tongtian (Sky High) Terrace. When I finally scaled Dawang Peak, the clouds and the fog had evaporated, and I surmised that the celestial beings had just finished their morning session. Looking down, I saw mountains looming ethereal in the distance, ravines were cocooned in lush vegetation, and streams wound





their way through the terrain like many silk ribbons. Beneath my feet the Wuyi Mountain Villa lay like a celestial dwelling planted by mistake in a mundane world.

On my descent from Dawang Peak, I stopped over at the Wuyi Palace on the southern side of the mountain, where emperors in bygone days used to hold sacrificial ceremonies in honour of the God of Wuyi. I also visited the Memorial Hall of Zhu Xi, an ancient confucian scholar.

A Nine-Bend Rafting

In the afternoon, I joined a group of travellers for a cruise along the Jiuqu (Nine-Bend) Stream aboard a bamboo raft. The boatman, while manoeuvring the raft with a long bamboo punt, reeled off one amazing tale after another about the scenes and sights along the river. Marvelling at the mountainous scenery from a raft is indeed a unique and leisurely way of travelling in the Wuyi Mountains.

Returning to Wuyi Mountain Villa in the late afternoon, I went to a teahouse for a cup of tea. The world-famous Wuyiyan tea has both the sweetness of red tea and the delicate scent of green tea, but only by sipping it slowly can its real taste be appreciated.

In the evening, I was invited to a banquet held at the dining room poetically named Xizhao Zhumu, or Pearl Curtain Under the Setting Sun. Outside the window, we saw a waterfall tumbling from a height of a dozen metres into a pool, in which a duck and a goose were frolicking. The strange pairing of duck and goose stems from the belief that if two geese of opposite sexes are put together they are likely to elope.

During the banquet our palate was liberally tempted by a dozen or so courses of local specialities.

The day I bade farewell to the mountain villa, a thick fog descended. Had the local celestial beings arrived to see me off? The thought filled me with reverence and awe.



Translated by Ling Yuan



1



2

1. Drifting down the Jiuqu Stream and soaking up the mountainous scenery aboard a bamboo raft is a most relaxing experience.
2. Are these people on their way to the morning session of celestial beings?
3. This tiny store is unbelievably housed in a stone cave.
4. Those who love cold water may splash about in the Jiuqu Stream.
5. The making of Wuyiyan tea
6. Those who want to achieve immortality must be able to eat insects.



Tips for the Traveller

Location and transport: The Wuyi Mountain Villa is situated on a road leading to the Wuyi Mountain Holiday Resort. Bus and minibus services are available from the city of Wuyishan. The villa is only six kilometres from the Wuyishan Airport, where passenger shuttles whisk travellers to the villa at regular intervals. There are direct flights from Hong Kong to Wuyishan on Mondays and Thursdays; a round-trip ticket costs HK\$2,200.

Lodging rates:

Pengzuwu Guesthouse (deluxe): 1,800 yuan;
luxury suite: 1,080-1,280 yuan;
family suite: 600 yuan; standard room: 480 yuan;
double-bed room: 380 yuan.

Tel: (599) 525 2981 Fax: (599) 525 2567

Note: During peak tourist seasons, the Wuyi Mountain Villa presents tea ceremonies in Wuyi style and song and dance variety shows. Please check with the hotel for details.

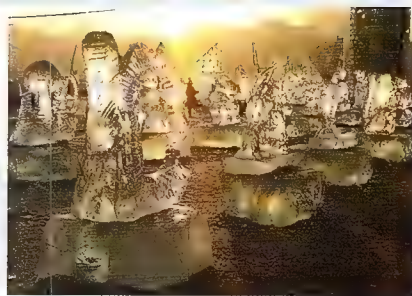
TOURIST MAP OF WUYI MOUNTAIN VILLA





SPECIALITIES

Ice and Snow Carvings:



It would be too superficial for anyone to

think that the Harbin ice carvings are easily made out of ice blocks through some chiselling and hammering. In fact, any piece of ice carving is a piece of art work created with the combination of weather, topographical advantage and people's support....



*Photos by Shan Xiaogang and Xie Guanghui
Article by Shan Xiaogang*

the Frozen Art



As Cold as in the Nether World

Soon after the northeast-bound train set off from Beijing, snowflakes began to drift down. This was my first time to see snow, and I became very excited. People said it was terribly cold in snowy weather. Only heaven knew it; all I wanted was that the train ran faster so that I could get off the train sooner.

A night of sleep brought me to Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang, where I found a world of ice and snow. It was freezing cold when I got off the train. "Heavens, I've entered the nether world!" I exclaimed. For a southerner

like me, such term as "the cold wind chills one to the bone" was something I read in books, and -20°C was only an abstract number. Now I knew what they actually meant – it was really cold. After taking a deep breath and grinding my teeth, I dashed out of the train station and hired a taxi to take me to the hotel. After checking in, I went northward along the Central Street towards the Songhua River.

The Ice Diggers

It was still early in the morning, but there were people who had arrived at the Songhua River earlier than I. They were ice diggers. I used to think it was easy to gather ice from the river since there is plenty of it. But a closer examination proved it was no easy job. I saw two strong men use a huge electric saw to cut ice into one-metre cubes, which looked like pieces of beancurd. But taking those ice blocks apart was not as easy as

separating beancurd cuts. It needed several people to join their efforts together. People who come to visit ice carvings should not forget the contributions of those ice diggers.

Then I went to the playground on the ice. On the vast white river few people were seen and only colourful flags were fluttering in the chilly wind. Taking the advantage of free admission in early morning, I went to the playground to watch artisans hosing ice hills and forests. The morning sun tinged the ice carvings with golden rays, making them even more transparent and more enchanting.

The Polishing of the Sun

At eight o'clock lively young people came one after another to the playground, where ice blocks lay in a neat array. Having found their own ice block, they stood around



it and began to work. I approached one group and saw a young man took out a pencil to make a sketch, while the others wielded shovels and chisels at the object, producing a hubbub of tinging sound and sending ice chips to all directions. After a while the plain ice block was turned to a vivid sculpture. I could not help exclaiming these young artisans' excellent craftsmanship.

But when I walked closer, I found the surface of the sculpture was rather rough.

When I asked a young man why they didn't polish their carvings to the minutes, he told me that the polishing was not their work but the sun's. In a few days the sunshine would turn the rough surface of the ice carvings smooth and shiny. I also learned that those young artisans had come to Harbin from throughout the country to participated in the national juvenile ice carving competition.

An Exclusive Product of Heilongjiang

I learned that only ice blocks from the Songhua River in Heilongjiang can be processed into such beautiful ice carvings. This is because the ice frozen naturally from the water in the Songhua River is transparent, while the ice made artificially from stagnant water was milky white.

The ice carvings covered a wide range of subjects including human figures, animals, auspicious dragons and beasts, buildings, landscapes, and characters of legends. These ice carvings were surrounded by bigger ice carvings of buildings such as towers, pavilions, mazes, historical sights,

and halls and palaces as described in Andersen's fairy tales. They looked shimmering with silver stars in favourable light, crystal-like in reverse light, and changing in the reflection of sunshine.

After visiting the ice carvings, I climbed up the high slide made of ice. With a cold wind blowing on my face, I slid down the board in high speed. It was really fun. Then I rented a colourfully decorated horse sleigh and went across the frozen river to visit the snow carvings on Sun Island.

The Running Nose of Snow Carvings

The Ice and Snow Garden was located inside the Sun Island Park. Standing erect at Sun Lake at the foot of Sun Mountain were about a hundred art works created for this year's international snow carvings competition. Some of the figures were as high as two-storey buildings. People who walked in front of them looked so tiny as if they had come from the country of dwarfs. Compared with ice carvings, snow carvings looked more roughly hewn because snow has a different texture. I found all figures had a running nose like children who had caught a cold. A closer examination told me that the "nasal mucus" was a long line of melted snow. It is very interesting that human beings have a running nose when it gets cold but snow figures have a running nose because of the warmth.

Snow carving artists told me that as snow is easier to melt than ice, snow carvings must be repaired repeatedly, about once in every three-five days. Each time, the

Previous page: These young people are all the contestants in the national juvenile ice carving competition. (by Xie Guanghui)

1. Naturally frozen ice in the Songhua River is especially crystal. (by Chen Ling)
2. Ice diggers at work (by Chen Ling)
3. Spraying snow carvings with a hose looks easy but demands a lot of skill. (by Shan Xiaogang)
4. One artist draws the design while the others chisels. (by Xie Guanghui)





artisan would shovel off the melted surface of the sculpture, so the snow carvings I saw were no longer in their original size. A fat snow figure, for example, had become as slim as a fashion model.



After visiting the snow carvings, I tried everything in the park, learning to ski on the snow track, flying a kite on the ice, whipping a top like a child, riding a dog sleigh, having lunch in the ice hut and went to the ice lavatory. It was only by the time I returned to the hotel did I find that both my hands and feet had swollen up with the cold.

Ice Lantern – the Latest Fashion

The ice lantern show is an evening programme no one should miss. In December every year ice blocks from the Songhua River

are transported to Zhaolin Park situated on the bank of the river to get ready for the annual ice lantern festival. Knowing that it was still in the Lantern Festival season, I hurried to the park as soon as I warmed myself up. When I reached the street, I saw ice lanterns were placed in front of every shop. This is the latest fashion in Harbin. The covers made of ice are used to keep out the wind, as well as to serve as decorations and symbols of shops. Today, even foreigners residing in Harbin put ice lanterns in the shape of a cross in front of their doors. Illuminated by numerous ice lanterns, the whole city of Harbin is brilliant at night.

Masterpieces of Architects, Gardeners and Art Workers

When I reached Zhaolin Park, the wind was blowing hard, and I shivered with cold. I looked at the thermometer — it was -25°C. Fortunately, there were many people in the park, which made me feel warmer. I bought two one-metre-long sticks of candied haws and ate them while walking.

The Harbin ice lantern festival is a big spectacle of ice carving. On display are various exquisite ice lanterns created by artists, architects and gardeners. To make their masterpieces, they would first carve the ice blocks into smaller pieces, install electric

wires and bulbs, and then stick the pieces together with water. Some of the ice carvings simply have the lights put outside them, so that the ice carvings in their entirety are visible in the brilliance of the lamplight.

Each ice carving was a combination of different art styles, modern, ancient, East and West. They shone with splendour under the illumination of the colourful lanterns. Walking amongst them, I felt dazzled, completely forgetting the coldness of the weather, and the passage of time and the place....



1. In the sunshine, ice carvings have a golden tinge and look particularly enchanting.
(by Shan Xiaogang)
2. This snow carving is as big as a real building.
(by Shan Xiaogang)
3. Ice carvings shimmering in brilliant lights
(by Xie Guanghui)

Tips for the Traveller

Tourist Spots: 1. Ice carvings and ice lanterns: Zhaolin Park in the city centre and the section of the Songhua River in front of the Flood-Control Monument in the northern city.

2. Snow carvings: Sun Island on the Songhua River.

The Best Time: from late December to January.

Other Programmes: Whipping ice tops, taking an ice sleigh, a horse sleigh and a dogsleigh, skating, skiing, firing snow cannons, and winter swimming.

Weather: Harbin's average temperature in January is -19.6°C . The wind is very strong on the ice. One must wear very warm clothes and pay special attention to footwear.

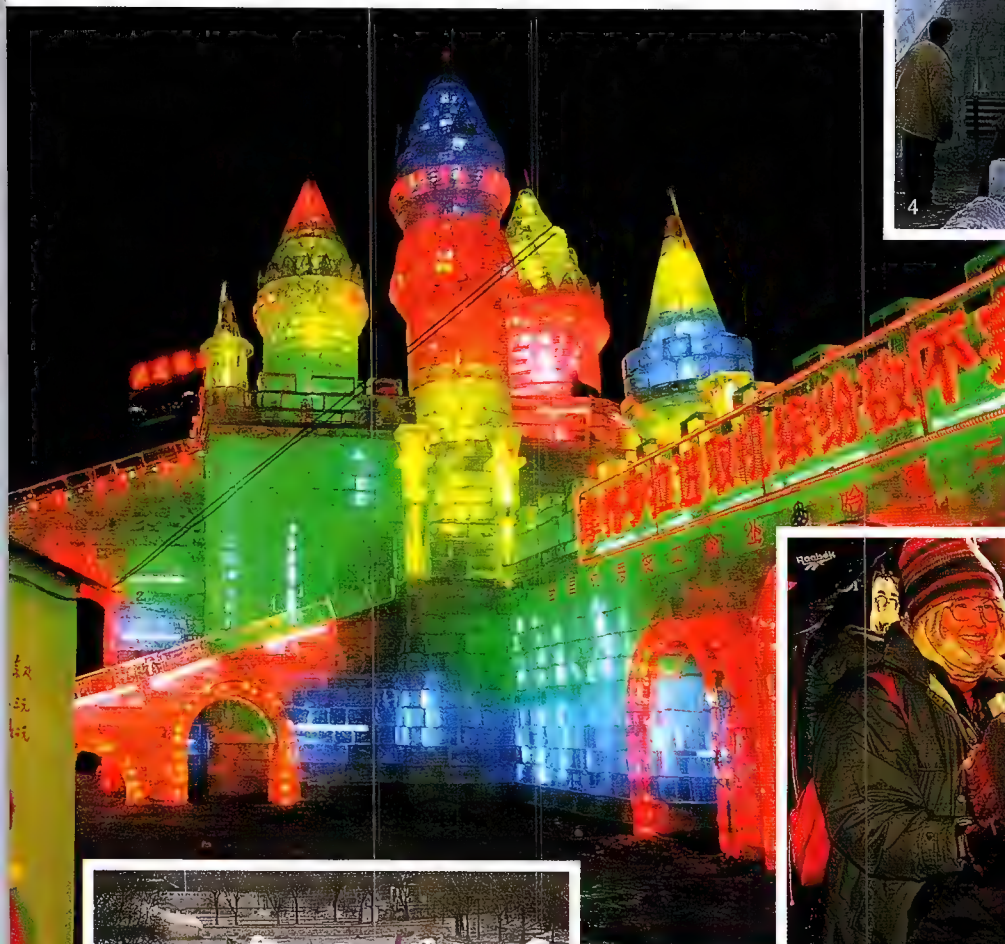
4. Sliding down on an ice slide board (by Xie Guanghui)

5. The lavatory built of snow is called "The White House". (Shan Xiaogang)

6. It is necessary to put on enough clothes to ward off the cold before going to the ice lantern show. (by Shan Xiaogang)

7. "Big Noses" at the Harbin Ice and Snow Festival (by Shan Xiaogang)

8. In the Sun Island Park are displayed about a hundred snow carvings. (by Shan Xiaogang)



CITY PROFILE



DONGGUAN –

AN ENERGETIC,
SELF-MADE CITY

Photos by So Lang Chi
Article by Winston Yau

"Rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub..." Sound of drums thunders in rhythm as it resonates along a wide river thronged with crowds. Synchronising their motion with the drum are the dragon boat rowers. All wearing a look of determination and solidarity, they flex and straighten their arms hard to drive the boats towards the finishing line.

This is the scene that welcomes you if you happen to be in Dongguan, one of the newly emerged cities on the Pearl River Delta, during the Dragon Boat Festival on the fifth day of the fifth month on the Chinese lunar calendar (usually falling in June). Dongguan is



situated east of Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong Province, and north of Shenzhen, the city neighbouring Hong Kong. When the 'dragons' are swimming forward to a close finish, the excitement of the race culminated in the resounding cacophony of drum, shouts and cheers.

1. The Human Bridge connects Dongguan and Panyu across the Pearl River estuary. (by So Long Chi)
2. Dongguan Science Museum
3. Reality development is booming in Zhangmutou. (by So Long Chi)
4. Changping serves as the transportation hub of Dongguan (by So Long Chi)

DONGGUAN

If one has to find something to draw an analogy with Dongguan's economic development, a dragon boat race as hilarious as this one would be the perfect candidate. Since the economic reform programme was introduced in the late 1970s, the city has been just as zealous as the dragon boat rowers as it strives for prosperity. In the past two decades, it has undergone unimagined rapid development.

Dongguan remained a small town until the late 1970s when the city was awakened to the tentative economic reform. Policies specially tailored for the new direction were carried out and Dongguan's door swung open to outside investment. Adventurous investors and developers from Hong Kong, Macau and countries such as Japan, the United States and Britain came to establish joint ventures or solely owned enterprises. By the early 1980s, there were about a hundred factories engaged in processing industries such as electronic watches and clocks, radio sets, textiles, rattan ware and toys. This trend kept growing and, in the early 1990s, Dongguan's industries expanded to cover high-tech areas such as electronics, electrical appliances, chemicals and medicine. Some of their products have appeared on overseas markets. By 1993, about 8,700 foreign-funded firms had been established and their industrial output value accounts for about a quarter of the city's total.

The increased opportunities have turned Dongguan into a magnet for young workers from all over China. Today, the youthful and vibrant work force constitutes a mobile population of about one million, of which 870,000 are engaged in industrial production and 90,000 in

commerce. This is quite a phenomenon as the urban population of Dongguan is just about 1.3 million. This vital injection of a powerful work force has invigorated what could otherwise be a backwater. Thanks to young migrant workers and business people who have swarmed into the city, the town has a booming catering and entertainment business. Mushrooming along the city's wide asphalt streets of the commercial area are discotheques, cafes, pubs and karaoke bars which come alive at night when people drop in after work to unwind.

An Important Link in the Transport System

Originally a county, Dongguan had its administrative status upgraded to that of a city under the jurisdiction of Guangdong Province in the early 1990s in line with its enhanced autonomy as an economic entity. Its economic strength has made it one of the province's "four little tigers". The city is situated on the Guangzhou-Shenzhen highway which links Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou, all of which are powerhouses of China's economy. Through Changping, a town in the east suburbs, Dongguan is linked with the Beijing-Kowloon Railway, Guangzhou-Shenzhen Railway and Guangzhou-Meixian-Shantou Railway. Humen Bridge, which spans the Pearl River estuary, connects Dongguan to Panyu (another booming city) on the west bank. The city's well developed transportation certainly gives it a competitive edge.

The Green World

The proportion of Dongguan's agriculture, manufacturing and the service industry, in terms of output values, changed from 45 : 43 : 12 in the late 1970s to 14 : 52 : 34 in the early 1990s, with manufacturing in the lead and service industry emerging as a key player in the city's economy. Nevertheless these figures do not imply that the agriculture has diminished or has even been supplanted. They only show the relative weight of the latter two sectors which is a result of their considerable growth. In fact, the change currently taking place in Dongguan is not merely the urbanisation of rural villages but also the integration of agriculture and industrialisation. Improvements in agrarian production are being actively sought with the help of up-to-date technology. Farm produce and specialities are cultivated in fenced-off bases and, in agricultural areas, farming and tourism are developing in an integrated manner.

One of the remarkable examples is Green World (Green Education Foundation) which was established in the early 1990s. The luxuriant





vegetation forms a perfect setting for the green park, said to be an oasis in the city where several hundred species of fruit and vegetable are cultivated. The park is a research and education centre, farm produce processing plant and tourist spot all rolled into one. In one part of the scheme, "Farmer's Life", visitors can try their hands at farming work in a farmstead. Keeping pace with the development of the botanical park is a breeding farm of rare animals where pheasants, peacocks, red-crested cranes, beavers, giant lizards and crocodiles are bred on a large scale.

Dongguan's Pride

Although Dongguan people are eager to get on the gravy train, they have not lost sight of their cultural heritage and the preservation and promotion of their history. A grand project launched to renovate historical sites and to build museums, a library and a science museum was completed by the end of 1994. Dongguan is intended to be both a commercial and edifying city.

Dongguan people are proud of their heroic history. Located on the lower reaches of the Dongjiang River, right in the middle of Guangdong Province, Dongguan was part of Panyu County during Qin (221-207 B.C.) and Western Jin (265-316) dynasties. In the year 757 during the

Tang Dynasty, the place came under the administration of Guangzhou. When the Ming Dynasty (1368-644) collapsed, the invading Manchus advanced to Dongguan and massacred a number of officials loyal to the Ming Dynasty who were buried in a place known as the "Mass Burial Site". Dongguan people met similar tragedy when they resisted the Japanese invasion during World War II. Many of the fighters were butchered on the banks of the Pearl River estuary.

Humen (Tiger Gate), situated at the river mouth was once heavily armed with guns and fortresses to ward off the British opium traders and navy during the Opium War (1841-1842) in which the Chinese army put up fierce resistance. Museums have been built and revamped to serve as reminders of Chinese heroic deeds against imperialism.

Looking forward to a brighter future with enthusiasm, the resilient Dongguan people try to swim in the current of economic development as fast as gold medallist swimmers from their hometown do in the Asian Games.

1. Ready for a hilarious dragon boat race (by Peng Zhengge)
2. Dormitories in industrial area
3. Investment in the future — Dongguan has devoted much efforts to education. (by So Long Chi)
4. Humen Town is the entrepot and production base of fashion designs. (by So Long Chi)

DONGGUAN

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

HISTORICAL AND TOURIST SITES

Keyuan Mansion

This Qing-dynasty classic Chinese mansion was built in 1850. Though small in scale, it is so neatly designed that all the essential elements of a luxurious Chinese mansion are included. Pavilions, waterside buildings, corridors, arched bridges, courtyard, flower beds, ponds and a study are laid out in harmony. Keyuan is right in the centre of Dongguan.

Lin Zexu Memorial Park and Opium War Museum

Located in Taiping, on the right bank of the Pearl River estuary is Lin Zexu Memorial Park. Lin Zexu was a Qing-dynasty imperial commissioner famous for his patriotic movement to ban the opium trade and against the British colonial aggression. In the memorial park are a memorial hall dedicated to Lin, a monument, sculptures of brave fighters, trenches where confiscated opium was destroyed and the Opium War Museum. Displayed in the museum are historic pictures, tools for taking opium, weaponry and documents, all of them fully illustrating the causes, process and consequences of the Opium War.

Shajiao and Humen Fortresses

Also situated on the Pearl River estuary, Shajiao fortresses are just 20-minutes drive from Taiping town centre and the Humen Fortresses are 70 kilometres west of Shenzhen. Many guns and fortresses used in the Opium War still stand in both places. For those interested in war history, they must not be missed.

Dongguan Museum

Finished in 1994, the 5-storey museum is situated in Dongguan city centre where the city's prehistoric and ancient dynastic relics are exhibited. The highlight of these exhibitions are the artefacts excavated from Han Dynasty tombs. Regular thematic exhibitions are also held.

Green World

In the Green World are exhibitions of older and more modern agriculture technology, as well as wooden facilities and ropes for exercises. Built as a research and education centre, Green World is intended to be an oasis in the city centre.

Humen Clothing Street

Humen town, the battlefield of the Opium War, is today renowned for its fashion boutiques, and as a production base of designers' brand names. Since the success of the International Fashion Trade Fair held in November, 1996, the township government has decided to hold the fair every year in autumn.

FESTIVAL

Dragon Boat Festival

The festival, observed on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, commemorates the patriotic poet Qu Yuan (340 – 278 BC) who drowned himself in a river as a protest against corrupt rule and the collapse of his native state. Dragon boat racing is believed to have derived from an ancient practice in which people row boats along the river where Qu Yuan drowned himself. They beat drums to scare away reptiles or other beasts and, at the same time, drop dumplings into the river to feed aquatic creatures to prevent the poet's body from being devoured by them. This also explains why glutinous rice dumplings are eaten during the festival.

Litchi Festival

This festival is celebrated on July 6 each year. A series of festival activities are held on the theme of promoting the city and its ties with those from all over the world who are engaged in the development of the city in all fields. Litchi is a speciality in Dongguan.

1. Luxuriating in the relaxed atmosphere of Keyuan (by Lin Jianhui)
2. Group sculptures of heroic people marks the battlefield of the Opium War. (by Lin Jianhui)
3. Exercising in the Green World (by So Long Chi)
- 4,5. Dongguan is famous for its specialities: Litchi (left) and aired pickled ducks.





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Rail: Alight at Shilong from trains from Shenzhen.

Ferry: Ferries shuttle between Hong Kong and Taiping. You can reach Dongguan city centre from Taiping by bus.

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RUSSIAN COMMUNITY IN XINJIANG

Photos & Article by Midge Conner

Russians in China's far Northwest? Yes! Ürümqi, the capital city of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region probably has the greatest number of Russians, yet I have also met a number of others tucked away in Tacheng City and Fuyuan County, both developing border areas, in Altay City, at Kanas resort, and in the more southerly border city of Yining. All of the above are located in the Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture in northern Xingjiang.

Although the community is not large, it is very much alive, especially in the springtime when the religious feast of Pascha – the Eastern Orthodox Church's name for Easter – is celebrated. It is the most important festival for China's Russian people who belong to the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity.

Pascha Celebrated in Ürümqi

It just so happened that I arrived in Ürümqi during Pascha. Bundled up in my winter woolies, I joined the Saturday evening celebration held at a tiny Orthodox Church located down a small side street not too far from the big Uygur market. Most Sunday mornings a faithful group of around 10 women meet here. On the eve of Pascha the congregation expanded to around 30. The worshippers filled the church with glowing candles placed reverently before icons (special Eastern Orthodox religious paintings).

In an Orthodox Church it is the custom for each person who enters the church to buy a candle, light it, and place it before an



icon, and then make the sign of the cross over him or herself. Because the church had no priest (the last one served until his death during the time of the "cultural revolution") the worshippers stood quietly, facing the front of the church, and listened to a cassette tape of prayers sung in Russian. Since most of them are not literate in Russian, they cannot read along in the prayer books that many of them possess.

For Pascha there is a lovely festive addition at the service. Each celebrant brings *kulich* (a special Pascha bread bearing a candle inserted in the middle) and places it on a platform in front of the church. When the service neared its completion, the candles in the bread were

lit, and the church was enveloped in a soft warm golden glow.

At this point Matushka (head "Mother", a Russian woman in her mid-80s who had been serving in this role for many years) shouted "Christ has Risen." And everyone shouted back: "He has Risen Indeed!" Hugs and kisses were exchanged freely to everyone, as each greeted the other with "Christ has Risen!" or the response: "He

1. An Eastern Orthodox Church in Urūmqi
2. At Alexander's accordion shop
3. Russian family graves





has Risen Indeed!" The church was filled with the atmosphere of exuding warmth, love and joy.

A Russian Party

Besides getting lots of kisses, I received an invitation to the Pascha party which was being held the following afternoon. It was at the party that I really saw the extended Russian minority community. The faithful from the night before were here with husbands, children, in-laws, grandchildren, and friends. Coming alone, I felt a bit self-conscious – it

instruments of all Russians – the balalaika, mandolin, guitar, and accordion. One group formed its own little choir and sang a few songs in broken Russian. And out on the floor some men wearing high leather boots leaped and kicked in Russian style; others waved their arms and bodies gracefully in the local Uyghur style! It was an interesting and exciting blend of cultures.

Women from Siberia

Though I was the only "tourist" present, I felt right at home chattering in my basic Russian and Mandarin with a few of the women, who were curious about me as I was about them. Actually I was the most Russian looking person present and everyone assumed that I was from Russia. I



seemed as though I had walked into a Chinese wedding or some other occasion for festivity. The people sitting around the tables laden with food held rather Chinese-looking faces.

One of the Russians from the night before recognised me and happily led me to her table. At once I knew that I was at a Russian party. On the tables were the special colourfully decorated breads from the night before, cans of fish, hard boiled eggs, chicken, and an abundance of spirits, just like at any Russian gathering. The woman who rescued me and her sister kept filling my plate with the festive food.

Then the band struck up and, to my surprise, it began playing Russian folk tunes. Included in the band were the favoured

was thought to be more Russian, as I speak Russian, looked Russian, and understood and appreciated much about the Eastern Orthodox Christian faith. The women were interested in my cross-border trips to Kazakhstan, Russia and China. They were also eager to hear about the new Russian immigrant community in my home country, the United States.

And they briefly told me their





stories. Most of these older Russian women were born in Siberia, and at some time during the 1930s – because they had married Chinese men living in Russia – were given exit visas for China, most of them coming to Xinjiang. Their children, most with Chinese faces, went to Mandarin speaking schools. The majority of these mothers didn't speak Russian to their children at home and didn't teach them about the Orthodox Christian faith.

A large wave of emigration took place in the early 1960s. Australia opened its door to these Russians. Today, many young people are again leaving for Australia to join their families. Yet some of them return to Xinjiang each year for Pascha because for these Chinese Russians it is the most important date on the calendar to get together with family.

I met a young lady who had just returned from Australia. Valya is in her mid-30s, tall and beautiful, fluent in Mandarin, and semi-fluent in English. Though she is happy in her new homeland of Australia, she looks forward to her home visits because she feels that she is more Chinese than anything else, and she misses her beloved Xinjiang, and her friends and family, especially her brother and mother who chose to remain in Ürümqi.

On my journeys around Xinjiang I encountered others belonging to the Chinese Russian ethnic minority. One such person named Viktor from Burqin County is the manager of Kanas resort. Because his mother spoke Russian at home, he can speak (but not read) Russian. He can also speak Mandarin, Kazak, and Uyghur. Viktor and his Han wife have registered their child as belonging to the Russian minority.

Russians in Yining

Russians of Yining City have perhaps the most easily defined identity. It can be seen especially in two families who have, for the most part, not inter-married and therefore retained their distinctive features and fluency in their native Russian language (even though they speak it with an accent). However, many of the younger generation (mostly those under 35) are literate mainly in Uyghur and Chinese. At one time the local Russian school was only attended by members of the Russian minority, yet today the school is composed primarily of Uyghur children who want to learn Russian.

There is a Russian bread shop next to Alexander's accordion shop. Alexander not only sells and repairs accordions, but also teaches

students how to play the instrument. And business is good. At the bread shop there is a steady stream of clientele, most of them Chinese, but while I was sitting there a man from the Xibo ethnic group came in for his daily bread.

When I dined at one of the homes, the main meal of the day consisted of Uyghur-style noodles. Nevertheless, it was obvious that I was in a Russian home. Windows and beds were draped in delicate cut-away design covers and various handicrafts were displayed; there were musical instruments




about, and the lingua franca was Russian. In the evenings I usually hung around, enjoying the family atmosphere. We sat around sipping tea, laughing, and listening to Alexander playing his accordion.

Their house, built in the local Uyghur-style, has a large wooden gate with an Orthodox-style cross on top. In this part of Xinjiang, there is no church building; Russian Christians have the habit of meeting in their homes for worship. Though the cross on top is Orthodox, the family members say that they are Evangelical Christians. They choose to keep their specific religious beliefs to themselves. Like the Ürümqi Russians, Pascha is their most important time of year, and they take a three-day holiday in order to celebrate it.

A Russian song and dance performing group has been formed in Yining and they have represented the Russian minority at various events throughout China. Their costumes are fashioned after old Russia, with embroidered shirts, loose flowing skirts or trousers, and high leather boots.

Russian headscarves and samovars (Russian teapots) are for sale all over Xinjiang. Now that there are lots of Russian tourists and traders thronging both Ürümqi and Yining everyday, and more and more shops are springing up with signs in Russian.

So perhaps the Russian community will once again flourish. Whether it does or not, I will always hold a special place in my heart for those of Xinjiang's Russian minority who have extended such warmth towards me. 

1. This Russian-style bedcover is made from a special cut-away process.
2. Uyghur children at the Russian school in Yining
3. Making Uyghur noodles
4. Members of the performing troupe in traditional Russian costumes
5. The author with Matushka at a Russian party

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